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August 29, 1882.

Vol. XI.

Single Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.Price,
5 Cents.

No. 266.

KILLB'AR, THE GUIDE; or, DAVY CROCKETT'S CROOKED TRAIL.

BY ENSIGN CHARLES DUDLEY WARREN,
(OF THE ENGINEER CORPS.)



"I'M THE VERY CHAP HE'S ARTER, THE GREAT B'AR AND INGIN FIGHTER."

Killb'ar, the Guide,

OR,
Davy Crockett's Crooked Trail.

BY ENSIGN CHAS. DUDLEY WARREN,
(Of the Engineer Corps.)

CHAPTER I.

IN A FIX.

"KER-WHOOP! Thunder and lightnin'! B'ars and catamounts!"

The speaker, a stalwart fellow, wearing a bear-skin cap, fringed-hunting shirt and leather leggings, lay sprawling upon the ground in the depths of a Georgian forest.

He evidently had fallen from a tree, and his mouth, while screwed up at one side, as if its owner was determined to hide all show of pain, revealed a set of white teeth seemingly stretched from ear to ear in a ludicrous grin. Half-sitting, half-reclining, one of his legs was thrown far up, supported by his right hand, his comical countenance being visible beneath.

He was on the point of rising, when from a clump of shrubbery not far off, half a dozen Cherokee Indians, who had probably been tracking the hunter, made their appearance!

Thus caught where resistance was impossible, the hunter seemed determined to make the best of his situation.

"Hello, skunks! ain't this a persition! Take my pictur', won't yer?"

Several of the Indians raised their tomahawks, when one, an old chief, interfered.

"English?"

"No! I'm Killb'ar. Come from t'other side of the Rocky Mountains on a greased whirlwind, to get rid of Suke Spoon, who are arter me though she knows I are a married man."

He sprung to his feet, when his rifle was taken from him, and his arms carefully secured with thongs of deer-hide.

"Big fall—no hurt!" said the chief, glancing up at the tree.

"I war up thar since midnight, dreaming about Suke, who had just caught me by the ha'r, when down I comed, restored to conscientiousness. I fell cl'ar from the top o' the tree."

"Lie!" exclaimed the chief—the broken branch not being fifteen feet above their heads.

"Cl'ar from the top, I tell yer! I broke t'other branch on the way, an' all from dreamin' of Suke Spoon. That gal are arter me to marry her, because I paid her some little contentions in the way of helpin' her bile some maple sugar while her daddy war off. Arter that she sweetened up to me, and when I said I didn't want to marry her, she caught up a gridiron when I cl'ared the way. She swore she'd foller me, and she'll keep her word, as she are a screamer. I've see'd her cl'ar a fifty-foot tree-top, and heerd her scream ten mile off, because her daddy wouldn't buy her a caliker gown."

"Pale-face talk plenty lie. Here, there, twist round and round like clouds change all time," said the chief, personifying a string of falsehoods as they struck his mind. "Burn lies all up in fire and smoke. How like that? Ugh!"

"Yer may burn my carcass but not my speerit, which are innumerable. I don't keer a fig fur you, nor fur any other red skunk."

The Indians had now started.

All round them as they proceeded, sung the sweet birds. The red light of the rising sun wove lines of beauty among the leaves of the pinnated calabash, the chestnut and the melancholy cypress; the fragrance of golden lily, sumac and thorn-apple filled the air.

In less than an hour the party reached the camp.

Among the assembled warriors stood Omoski, the handsomest, bravest, and most expert of his tribe, the son of the old chief Comigo, who had just come in with the prisoner. Not far from the young Indian warrior, watching him askance, was pretty Minniho, the belle of her tribe. She was attired in white deer-skin, which, trimmed with red, became her, well-matching the blushing cheek, the shining masses of dark hair, and the soft, black eyes.

"This are a charmin' little gal," remarked Killb'ar. "Thar's a hull bushel of stars in her eyes, and enny amount of luflight. Ef my heart war as susceptible as it war once, I should sartainly get entangled like a bull-fish in a net. Thar's Suke Spoon, which thinks herself some, but she kin make no comparative to this 'ere, whose feet to use a poultry (poetic) compres-

sion, is no bigger than white beans, while Suke's is big as frying-pans, and shakes the earth like an oliphant's."

While the other maidens were gathered round the new arrivals, Minniho, unseen by them, slipped into Omoski's hand a string of beautiful amber beads, which she had worked for him as a gift.

The young man bowed, and rather carelessly thrust the present into a pouch at his side, then joined those of his people who had gathered round the prisoner.

"Burn soon," said Comigo; "first see Indian throw tomahawk and knife."

"Ef I'm to be burned, I wish you'd hurry up! The pleasures of anticipation ain't very temptin' under present sarcumstances," cried Killb'ar.

The old chief's remark was greeted with applause. There was, on this day, to be a trial of skill with the weapons mentioned.

"Omoski will throw, too," said the old chief to his son.

"Omoski would rather seek the RED BEAR," was the answer.

Killb'ar, while seemingly indifferent, pricked up his ears at mention of the Red Bear. From boyhood having had intercourse with Indians, he could understand almost every word uttered by his captors. This was not the first time he had heard the name of the RED BEAR pronounced by savages. It was an appellation they occasionally bestowed upon DAVID CROCKETT, who, at this period, was celebrated far and near for his wonderful deeds.

From what the prisoner could gather, Omoski—than whom none of the Cherokee, or in fact of any other tribe, was more distinguished in chase or battle—had from youth panted to seek for mortal combat the formidable white hunter of the West.

On this day he had won the long-wished-for consent of his father and the other chiefs, to go in search of the great Red Bear.

But conditionally: If in seven days, by which time there was to be a battle with the whites, Omoski should not have met the Bear, or if, without having fought the same, he should return too late to take part in the battle, he was to die by his father's own hand!

Overjoyed, the young Indian now was the most active among his companions preparing for the game.

The preparations soon were completed. The tomahawk was first to be thrown. An Indian youth stood with his back to a tree, the weapon to be hurled within an inch of him without touching a hair. In a few minutes all but Omoski had made the trial, their tomahawks striking an inch or so wide of the mark. Easily, without apparent effort, the chief's son pulled forth his weapon and hurled it.

There was a low murmur of applause as the edge buried itself in the very line marked for the target.

"What think of that, pale-face?"

"Well enough for an Injun," answered Killb'ar, "but not a sarcumstance to what I've did. I once throwed a knife cl'ar over the top of a hundred-foot tree, so that it comed down, p'int foremost, and stuck in the head of a red-skin, beneath, on t'other side."

A contemptuous shrug was the only response.

The game proceeded, the knife being brought into requisition.

Many of the Indians hurled it well, but none of them to equal the skill of Omoski, who threw his so that the point passed through the scalp-lock of the youth at the tree, pinning it to the trunk.

Still Killb'ar looked quite indifferent.

"Wagh!" shrugging his shoulders; "this chap are smart, but he ain't a sarcumstance to me!"

The speaker's bonds were severed, a knife was placed in his hand.

"Let pale-face try," was the sneering remark.

"Ker-whoop, yer skunks, now ye'll see the fire fly!"

Refusing the knife, he picked up a rotten stump and hurled it straight at the Indian youth, striking him with the missile on the head.

"Thar, kin yer beat that!" he exclaimed, grinning as the pieces of wood fell all round the Indian's face.

The old chief looked angry, and shrugged his shoulders.

"The pale-face can do nothing. His words are as thunder from a little cloud!"

"Jist give me a knife and ye'll see. Let a gal stand by the tree instead of that 'are masculine!"

Not one of the maidens would come, until the old chief proclaimed that Omoski would throw, when forth stepped pretty Minniho, thus show-

ing her unbounded confidence in her lover's skill.

The word was given, the blade was hurled with a quivering motion.

Catching a lock of the girl's hair round the handle, the knife struck the tree, within a quarter of an inch of the bright head.

"That sart'nly war a powerful throw!" exclaimed Killb'ar, "but I kin beat it."

Several strong arms arrested him as he lifted the knife he held.

"Wagh! you're afraid! yer haven't nerve enough! Ker-whoop!"

Stung by the taunt, the Indians released his arm. Several, however, stood ready to brain the hunter, if he should harm the tribe's favorite.

"Now jist look hyar!"

Taking aim, he hurled the knife, when those who had expected to see it pierce the flesh of pretty Minniho, beheld it flying ten yards to the left of her, the handle striking on the nose the tribe's prophet, a little stumpy old Indian, supporting himself on a stick.

"That war a mistake! Let me try ag'in!"

Jeeringly an Indian gave him the knife, which, being thrown a second time, went turning over and over up among the branches of the tree.

"Whar is it? whar are it?" inquired the hunter, turning round and round, while glancing upward. "Hooraw! none of yer kin beat that throw. I tossed the knife cl'ar up into the sky!"

As he spoke, down came the weapon, falling into an iron pot behind the tree.

The Indians, having had enough of the captive's skill, now made him sit down, while preparations were being made for his torture and death.

Minniho, passing him, he touched the skirt of her robe.

"Jist tell yer loyver that ef he wants to find the Red B'ar, I kin guide him to the quarters of that 'are, as I happen to belong to the same parts. I kin do it in seven days easy, if nothin' happens."

On being informed of this, Omoski eyed the speaker keenly. A good judge of character, he was convinced that the hunter did not deceive him. There was also a something, a peculiar magnetism about the captive which pleased Omoski. He liked the man, and used his influence with his father to take him as his guide.

Strong objections were urged, but Omoski's impulsive eloquence was successful.

Deprived of all weapons, the hunter should be the Indian's guide, the old chief advising his son, when the two halted for sleep, to bind the arms and feet of his prisoner to prevent his escape, and always, when on the trail, to keep the white man in front, and to be ready to shoot him down at any proper provocation.

CHAPTER II.

A BIG LIFT.

At sunrise next morning Omoski stood equipped for his journey. He wore a buffalo cloak, prettily trimmed by Minniho, and carried besides his bow and arrows a handsome rifle, trophy of a victory won in fight with a celebrated chief.

Minniho turned aside her head to hide the tears of mingled pride and grief when the young warrior came to bid her adieu.

"Kerr-whoop!" exclaimed Killb'ar, "his buzzum ain't stirred by the divine inflatus. Why, ginger and molasses! When I war younger, a little critter once comed along and begun a weepin' out her sorrows on my shoulder. My feelin's sart'nly war then beyond compression. My heart war like a lump of meltin' lead, an' my hull bein' war stirred like a wasp-nest, when a stick are poked inter it. To get rid of my delikit situation, I jist gave one spring which landed me cl'ar down to the bottom of a well, thirty feet deep, when I war soon cooled off, after blowin' a few bubbles to the top."

Striking into a path leading westward into the forest, Omoski followed his guide, who moved with a celerity which taxed to its utmost the strength and activity of the young Indian.

"Come on, red-skin, come on!" Killb'ar would at intervals exclaim. "I'll bet yer my legs is the longest."

"Tongue plenty long. Stop speak. Move on!"

They journeyed swiftly on, until sundown, when finding themselves in the country of the Crees, with whom the Cherokees were then at war, they proceeded with more caution.

At night they halted in the heart of a thick forest!

"Stop; sleep! When sun burn sky, keep on!"

"I'm perfectly willin'," answered Killb'ar, squatting down, and proceeding to help himself to provisions out of the provision-sack, which he was made to bear, slung at his side.

"Wouldn't yer like some duck flesh, Injun?" he inquired, pointing about thirty feet above their heads, where a large wood-duck sat perched on a branch.

"Not cook now; not make fire."

"Sart'inly not, but we mought some other time."

So saying, he suddenly snatched Omoski's knife from his belt, and, by a peculiar whirl of the hand, sent it speeding upward, glittering like a lightning-flash in the rays of the moon.

To the Indian's unbounded surprise, the knife passed through the bird, which fell dead to earth.

"Funny man," said Omoski; "thought not know how to throw knife!"

"My fingers must hav been cramped in your infarnal camp," was the reply.

The duck was placed in the sack, after which the two prepared for sleep.

"Must tie white-face all fast," said the Indian, producing thongs of deer-hide. "Deer steal away when tiger sleep. Come!"

"Beggin' your pardon, the deer, as you tarm him, refuses to be tied. Who in thunder are you lookin' at in that way?" as Omoski's eyes flashed on him like live coals.

The tomahawk was upraised.

"Kill quick if not be tied. Come!"

"Thar's no need of my comin', seein' as I'm already hyar," the hunter coolly replied. "I won't be tied, but I give ye my word I won't try to escape."

"Tie!"

"Thar, that are the third time I've been consulted by you and yer brother skunks!" cried the hunter, looking straight over the speaker's shoulder.

Then suddenly bounding forward, he pushed the Indian back with a force which brought him to the ground like a sledge-hammer.

Left untouched where he had fallen, the Indian, while burning with indignation, was surprised at Killb'ar's singular forbearance. He could account for this only by supposing the hunter to be a coward, wholly bent on making his escape.

As the thought passed swiftly through his mind, he heard something whiz through the air, making a strange, hollow sound.

Jumping up, he perceived that Killb'ar was gone.

About ten feet from where he stood, however, the thick underbrush was violently agitated, and a succession of strange noises issued from it. These noises consisted of heavy breathing, frequent grunting, and now and then a prolonged, half-suppressed snarl like a panther's! The noises increased as the Indian hurried to the spot; the voice of his guide now being distinctly audible:

"You infarnal skunk!—thar's a taste of my nails! Take that, will yer! B'ars and cata-mouts! Thunder and lightnin'! What yer doin'? Squarm! squarm! squarm and kick, will yer! Thar's a punch in the eye fur yer! Squir-r-r! squir-r-r! bur-r-r! Hooraw! hooraw! I'll make yer fur fly! Yer may kick—yer may jump, and yer may twist! Hyar's a hoosier that'll blow yer up like a bar'l of gunpowder!"

So rapidly were these words uttered, that they were finished by the time Omoski reached the underbrush whence the voice of the hunter proceeded.

Pushing aside the bushes, he then discovered Killb'ar engaged in a desperate struggle with a powerful Indian of the Cree tribe; the motions of both being so swift and supple that their legs and arms seemed to go round and round like a windmill.

Omoski was about firing upon the Indian, when Killb'ar's voice was again heard:

"Hold, thar! don't yer fire! And now cl'ar the track! Hyar's the trick of a hoosier cata-mout!"

So saying, the hunter—who by a skillful movement, had contrived to get between the legs of his antagonist—suddenly lifting himself, sent the Cree spinning head-foremost over Omoski, into the thick shrubbery beyond.

The Cherokee sprung toward the spot, tomahawk in hand, but the other had by this time vanished, not, however, until Omoski had caught a glimpse of his face, and recognized him as Erigo, a chief who had vainly endeavored to induce Minniho to forsake her tribe and go to his wigwam.

"Thar!" said Killb'ar, now stepping forth, "that 'are skunk did fight powerful!"

"He is a dog!" answered the other. "He

sneaks away when he should fight. His tribe are all dogs. They have bitten some of our men to death. Ten Crees fight two Cherokee—ugh!"

"I respect yer feelin's, Injun, and kin understand 'em; fer I too have lost them as war dearer to me than the fattest b'ar or bufferler! Killed by red skunks, the poor critters is a-sleepin' thar last sleep, not in a horizontal position like Christ'ins, but with thar poor bones scattered hyar and thar like drumsticks!"

He then explained why he had thrown the Indian in such an unceremonious manner. He had seen the Cree, just as his tomahawk was about to leave his hand, and but for his hurling his companion down, the weapon must have cloven his skull. The Indian was armed with a rifle, which he had probably intended to discharge at Killb'ar after braining the other. When the hunter sprung upon him, he was in the act of cocking his piece, which the other prevented by knocking the weapon from his grip.

"I lit war a powerful toss I gave the red-skin," continued the speaker, "but not a circumstance to what I did once, which war to toss one cl'ar up to the top of a tree, a hundred feet high. Although the skunk war dead, he clung to the branch for two hours arterwards!"

"Big talk! Pale-face brave, but too much talk!"

"Not too fast, Moscow, not too fast. Thunder and lightnin'! I've met with greater adventur's than that! I've foller'd Injuns like a streak! Once I straddled my rifle when I war arter some, and firin' it off it carried me jist forty miles in a minute, which war too fast, as I war shot cl'ar over the heads of them I war arter! That l'arned me caution, which are the better part of value!"

Returning to the brushwood where the contest had taken place, Killb'ar reappeared, grinning from ear to ear, with the Cree's rifle and knife, which had been left there.

"This is a purty good piece," remarked the hunter, "and though I are yer pris'ner, Moscow, I'd like to keep this as a trophy!"

"Yes, good! Omoski's prisoner no more. You save Omoski's life! Omoski's hand shall never be lifted against his white—"

"Hist!" interrupted Killb'ar. "Make no rash promises, Moscow! The best of friends sometimes has scrimmages. Thunder! I war once engaged in a mortal combat with one which war my buzzum companion! I jist fired my rifle in a'r, and give the seller I war engaged with a hug, which war so powerful it reminded us that we war both friends, and war doin' wrong!"

As he spoke, Killb'ar drew forth the ramrod of his piece, and thrusting it into the ground, applied his ear to the upper end.

"I hear a buzzin' in the 'arth! Thar's Injuns around! We'd better make our quarters in some other part."

"It is well."

They traveled several miles further before they again halted.

"That Minnie-hello, or hello-Minnie, whatever you call her, are a purty critter. She are a very different bein' from Suke Spoon, and I s'pose you intend marryin' her," said Killb'ar, stretching himself on the ground.

"Don't know. Perhaps she love somebody else."

"How kin ye know that? Once I thought Suke Spoon war arter a Puritan minister. But I changed my mind when one day he put his foot on her pumpkin-patch! It war an accident, but what a yell she gived! You mought have heard it cl'ar hyar. She jist rushed into the garden, and throwed a hot skillet arter him, which showed me that her heart wasn't pierced by Cupid's arrer!"

"Right! Love like stars, flowers, and sunshine. No storm—ugh!"

"Yer right, Moscow, a-leavin' out yer stars, which are a little too fur-fetched. The devotion of t'other sex sometimes makes 'em desprit. Thar's Suke Spoon would take my h'ar for not lovin' her."

"Talk enough! Moon high! Better go sleep!"

"That are parfectly sensible, Moscow," replied Killb'ar. And throwing himself down, he was asleep in five minutes, thus compelling the Indian to stand guard!

CHAPTER III. THE HORRIBLE HAND.

A DESIRE to escape the persecutions of Suke Spoon was not the only motive which had led Killb'ar to "this side of the Rocky Mountains."

A sort of knight-errant of the woods, he had been brought up a thorough hunter, and had

thus acquired a strong distaste for settling in one place. Having lost several relatives by tomahawk and scalping-knife, he had learned to look upon most red-men as his mortal foes, and had made a solemn vow to assist any white person whom, in his wanderings, he might meet in a situation requiring his aid. Of tough, sinewy frame, he seemed capable of enduring any amount of hardship—could sleep as sound in a hollow tree or upon its topmost branch as upon the bear skin which he always carried slung upon his shoulders, and could walk thirty miles without fatigue.

It was natural that such a man, hearing it reported that troops under General Jackson were on their way to fight Seminoles and Cherokees, should set out with the intention of joining the marching army.

He had, however, still another purpose in traveling to the East, that of being present at the marriage of a friend of his—a young man named Mark Winters, who, by a trapper, had sent him word of and an invitation to the approaching wedding, which was to take place in a little settlement near to and on the west of the Savannah river.

This settlement Killb'ar had visited in his boyhood, but could not now recall its exact situation. As a consequence, he had passed it many miles before a negro, whom he chanced to meet and question, informed him of the fact. He had, just before being captured by the Cherokees, intended to retrace his way; but now being guide to Omoski, he must pass considerably to the nor' h of it.

The girl whom Mark Winters intended to marry was Lucy Ward, eighteen years old, and the acknowledged belle of the settlement. Her eyes, while full of spirit, were of a soft brown, her skin of a healthy clearness, her features delicate. In fact, there was an expression almost ethereal about the white brow and in the intelligent eyes, owing, perhaps, to her superior culture; her uncle, with whom she had lived since an orphaned childhood, having encouraged in her a taste for books, not often evinced by the frontier damsels of that period.

On the day after the adventure met with by Killb'ar and Omoski, Lucy Ward sat in her uncle's home, expecting her intended husband, the marriage being fixed for the following night.

Hours passed, and still the bridegroom came not.

The report that Jackson's troops were on the way had rendered the settlers more careless than their wont, although there was a rumor that the settlement might at any time be attacked.

Mark Winters, wholly unsuspecting of peril, had ridden forth without arms, in the morning, to bring to the settlement the minister who was to perform the ceremony, and who resided in another little village, several miles further to the south.

His protracted absence excited in the girl feelings of great anxiety. Unable at last to bear the suspense, she left the room unseen, and mounting her horse, dashed off into the woods, hoping to meet Mark before proceeding far. Riding ten miles, her horse suddenly took fright at a branch, which fell crashing in her path, and dashed off at a tremendous pace, carrying her miles further, before she could check its course.

Tying the horse to a tree, she then sat down upon a rock, feeling very miserable. She was roused from her troubled reverie by some singular outward influence. She turned and raised her eyes, to behold those of an Indian fixed keen and glittering upon her face. It was the magnetism of that glance which had waked her.

The Indian was Omoski.

There he stood, mingled admiration and respect in his glance; but she, not the less startled, sprung to her feet with a slight scream.

Glancing down, at the same moment, she beheld at her feet a large rattlesnake whose eyes seemed turned up to her own!

A half-smile lighted the Indian's face.

"Been kill!" he said, tapping his tomahawk; "cannot harm the white dove!"

"Oh, I see! you are a friendly Indian! Speak! have you met a white man on horseback in the woods?"

A cloud passed over the Indian's face.

"The dove's heart is in her eyes! She loves white man!"

"Yes, oh, yes!"

"Omoski has not seen him!" said the young warrior, gloomily.

"Ker-whoop! hello! Hyar's a discovery! What is it, Moscow?"

And Killb'ar, who had halted near a stream to get some water, now appeared.

Lucy explained.

"Well, now, this are a meetin'! So you are the girl Mark's goin' to marry? I'm powerful glad to see yer, as Mark war a great friend o' mine! I'll jist see yer safe to the settlement, and will then help to hunt for the missin' one!"

"Oh, what can have become of him?"

"Cheer up, my poor gal! I'll hunt up your lovyer! It isn't my first exper'ence in that're kind of work. I kin say I've bunt'd up a hundred and fifty, found 'em all, and seen 'em united to the objecks of their affeckshuns. One lovyer war so grateful to me that he made me a present of a bushel of potatoes, a bar'l of b'iled beef, and offered me one of his young-ones when it war born, which I declined because it looked too much like an Injun and had a belly like an empty bar'l of whisky!"

The three—Lucy mounted on her horse—were soon on their way toward the settlement.

They traveled for two hours, when Lucy, who now was much puzzled as to the proper direction, said she believed they were going the wrong way.

"Thar's a smoke 'way off thar!" exclaimed Killb'ar, pointing to the southward; "p'raps that comes from the settlement. I've see'd it ever since noon; hope the Injuns hev not set fire to the houses, but guess not, as the smoke ain't thick enough. The fondness of the Injun natur' for fire are perfectly miraculous. Thar's all kinds of ejaculations as to whar the Injuns come from, some holdin' forth that they come from snappin'-turtles, some from Asiatic Afriker, and t'others from terbacker, ginger and molasses! Kin enny Christi'n swaller sich nonsense! Come, Moscow, own up that yer race come straight from the devil!"

"Manitou knows! Indian come from war-horse! White man from sheep!"

"Yer are welcome to yer opinion, Moscow, perfectly welcome! Yer great Man-toe, as yer call him, though, may yet kick yer all into the Perciflick ocean!"

Omoski's eyes flashed fire.

"The white-faces *may* drive the red-men into the setting sun! We will see!"

"Not quite so fur as that! With the help of corks yer might float on the ocean and be picked up, but the settin' sun won't pick yer up!"

"Why would the white man rob us? This land was made for us! The birds say this to us. The bright, laughing fish say it, too!"

"It's no use, Moscow. Yer can't make me swaller that. I never heerd a fish larf but once, and that war a big cat-fish, that I made a grab at with my teeth, when I war once hard up for a dinner, and wanted to ketch the critter as it swum past. He jist gave one spring away from me, and then stickin' his head out o' water burst into sich a guffaw as split him cl'ar in two. That war a triumph to me! I cooked one-half, and saved t'other for Suke Spoon, with whom I war then on friendly terms."

The smoke now was no longer visible. In a couple of hours, just before sundown, the party beheld something which made them pause with sensations of awe and surprise.

"What was it?"

A strange, hideous looking object, it protruded from the shadows of the lindens, the cypresses and white-leaved oaks, growing round the borders of a swamp.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Killb'ar, cocking his rifle, "that are a strange critter! It looks like a b'ar as ain't a b'ar, arter all!"

In fact, the object at first resembled some huge animal, seated on its haunches, but a keen inspection gave it a different aspect.

It was the trunk of a tree, about fifteen feet in height, charred and blackened, as if by recent fire. Near the top, projecting straight out, there was something which might have been mistaken for a broken branch, but for its peculiar shape and rigidity.

Examining this closely, Killb'ar perceived that the projection was nothing less than a human arm deprived of its flesh and of its five fingers!

"Come hyar, Moscow. Thunder! this are martenly a horrible sight!"

The Indian advanced, followed by Lucy, who had dismounted.

To whom had the arm belonged?

Killb'ar, trembling with a horrible suspicion, examined the tree closely. There was in the trunk, near the ground, an opening large enough to admit the human body, which, charred and bleached by fire, the hunter now beheld wedged in the tree. The unfortunate, whoever he was, had evidently crawled into the hollow to escape Indians, who, discovering him, had burnt him ther' alive!

Searching for something to prove the identity

of the deceased, Killb'ar picked up a ring. This soon caught the eye of Lucy Ward, who recognized it as one she had often seen on Mark's middle finger.

She leaned almost fainting against a tree.

"It is he!" she gasped. "Oh, my God!"

Killb'ar supported her with an arm.

"You are right, I'm afraid, my poor gal. I'll avenge yer lovyer; I'll make some of the redskins squarn for this deed."

"That will not bring him back!" moaned Lucy. "Oh, Mark! Mark!"

Her eyes were wild; it seemed for several moments as if she must lose her reason.

Omoski, watching her, said:

"The white dove must not die. She will live to sing again."

Lucy turned, shuddering, away. All Indians, friendly or otherwise, must after this excite aversion.

Some time elapsed before Killb'ar could persuade the stricken girl to mount and resume her journey.

The Indian said he would await Killb'ar's return from the settlement, the houses of which were visible in the far distance, through an opening among the trees.

Thither Killb'ar and Lucy repaired. The news spread rapidly, and a party soon were at the tree, burying the dead.

Omoski had vanished.

Having seen the body buried, Killb'ar followed the Indian's trail, and came upon him secreted in the shrubbery, his eyes fixed on the house where Lucy lived.

"See hyar, Moscow! What in thunder are yer up to? Hope yer mean no harm to that poor stricken gal!"

"No; but the spirit is gone out of the Indian! The eyes of the dove have drawn it away from him. They have lighted his heart like the sun, When they go, he sees only clouds!"

"Thar, now, none of yer poultry. Jist tell me, in plain skunk language, what yer mean."

The Indian, shrugging his shoulders, answered not, but moved on toward the settlement.

"Whar in thunder are yer goin'? Yer'll never find the Red B'ar in that direction."

Omoski stopped.

"Ugh! Yes, goin' wrong way!"

"Come," exclaimed Killb'ar, moving toward the west, "we ain't no time to lose!"

"Will the white man leave the wounded bird?"

"Sart'inly, ef yer mean Lucy Ward. I used to do a powerful sight of consolin', but I've lost the fakility now. Mark war dearer to that gal than spiced buffeler-meat."

A shadow crossed the Indian's brow.

"She loved the pale-face well."

"Yer kin b'lieve that. The poor critter are like a crushed grasshopper. Thar's no chirp left to her."

Now the Indian, with bowed head, slowly followed his companion.

"In a few days more," said Killb'ar, "yer'll be fightin' the Red B'ar."

The young warrior's eyes flashed; but only for an instant. His glance went back toward the settlement. Thither he turned his face, every now and then, as the two moved on toward the setting sun.

When night came, they halted for rest and sleep.

Killb'ar awoke at daylight, to discover that his companion was gone!

In fact, Omoski had risen three hours before, and taken the back track toward the settlement.

"The white dove has made a coward of Omoski," muttered the Indian, as he proceeded. "He thinks less and less of the Red Bear! The Great Manitou prevent his breaking his word!"

Finally he came close upon the settlement.

Screened by shrubbery, he beheld Lucy Ward, at this early hour, seated in a grove, mourning for her lost lover.

He sought her side; she looked up, and shuddering, recognized him.

"Omoski!"

"Yes, come again."

"Go. Why are you here?"

"Omoski can not go away. The dove's eyes hold his heart."

"Killb'ar said you were bound west, to meet the Red Bear."

"Omoski can think no more of the Bear. He can only think of the white bird. He would give up all for her. See!"

From his pouch he pulled forth the beautiful amber beads Minniho had given him. He would have thrown them round her neck had she not drawn back.

"Won't take beads?" he said, sorrowfully.

With childlike simplicity he stood, holding them up before her gaze.

"Give them to some girl of your own tribe; Lucy's heart is with her lover in the grave. Go!"

The Indian walked sorrowfully away, and was soon out of sight in the deep forest. Finally he paused, again turning his glance toward the settlement.

"Time may come. The white bird may ye sing for Omoski in his wigwam."

As he spoke, the Indian fancied he heard a sigh. He started up, examined the shrubbery on both sides of him, but seeing nothing, concluded it was the wind he had heard.

He was mistaken; it was Minniho! She had indeed followed on her lover's trail, unable to bear his absence.

Poor Minniho!

CHAPTER IV.

A MAD BEAUTY.

UNOBSERVED by her friends, the Indian girl had quitted the camp to follow her beloved. Carefully tracing the crooked trail, she had reached the vicinity of the settlement only that morning, and, by the merest chance, had been a witness to Omoski's interview with Lucy in the grove—bad seen him offer her gift to the white-faced girl.

Who can describe her grief?

Deep in the recesses of the dark forest, she mourned long over her disappointment.

Then hope animated her bosom. Perhaps, after all, Omoski's interest in the girl was nothing but one of those airy fancies which would soon pass away.

Watching her lover, after he entered the woods, she saw him proceed westward. He walked slowly, expecting to meet Killb'ar, until night, when he paused. The whippowil now sung in the tree, the wild-duck shrieked in the marshy pond. A strange feeling of superstition came over the Indian.

Turning, he found himself in front of the tree in which the dead body had been discovered.

Was it imagination? No, it was reality. There was the arm of the body—that body which had been buried—still protruding from the tree!

He was yet more startled at hearing a voice, seeming to proceed from the hollow trunk!

"On, Omoski! on toward the west! Let no white-face lure him from his path! Glory awaits him in his combat with the Red Bear! He will conquer!"

The Indian stood as if spell-bound.

"The voice of Manitou!" he exclaimed, trembling with awe. That voice shall be obeyed. Omoski turns to the west. The dove's spell is broken."

He hurried on. A cloud passed over the moon—the wind rose shrieking.

Hark! was that the murmur of a rivulet?

Omoski thought so, but he was mistaken. It was the silver laugh of Minniho, still following her truant lover.

Before midnight her heart sunk.

The beauty of the white girl again rose like a summer-cloud in the Indian's mind. His steps were turned back toward the settlement.

Frenzy was now in Minniho's heart. The baby beauty of Minniho had done the mischief—won her lover away from her.

A dark thought passed through her mind.

Death to the white-face girl!

Minniho carried a superb rifle; she was a good shot.

Before daylight she was close upon the little grove, back of the settlement, in which, as she had expected would be the case, she discovered Lucy.

In this grove she and Mark had often met. What more fitting place to mourn for her lover?

Watching her with blazing eyes, Minniho carefully cocked her rifle.

Just then, from the opposite shrubbery, appeared Killb'ar, and stood before the white girl, leaning on his rifle.

"Don't be startled. You kin see it's on'y me! Hev yer seen Omoski lately?"

At Lucy's reply Killb'ar's eyes twinkled.

"Jist what I suspected. It's perfectly marvelous that Moscow, which in t'other respects are a sensible skunk, should lift his eyes to such as you. Love, however, are a powerful stimulator, and works wonders. Thar's Suke Spoon, which on ordinary occasions isn't at all given to larfter—when that critter used to see me comin', she'd burst out a-larfin', so that I could always tell when she war expectin' me by seein' the shingles fly from the roof o' the house."

Pausing a moment, he went on:

"It's my opinion this 'ere place will be attacked before long. I war trampin' along in search of Omoski a few hours ago, when I come to a place from which I could see down into a valley. Thar I saw two Injuns conversin'. One of them was a Cherokee, and t'other a Cree, which shows thar's some late agreement between the two tribes. Ef thar wasn't I'd hev seen the fur fly, as the two would hev jined in mortal combat."

He did not add that he had found the grave in which the dead body taken from the tree had been buried, opened and the body pulled out, and put back into the hollow trunk.

Who but Indians would have performed such a deed?

"I will tell my uncle, sir."

"And don't you come to this grove any more. Ef thar's Injuns around, yer don't know at what moment they mought take yer ha'r."

As he spoke, Killb'ar's eyes lighted up strangely.

"Look out thar! Ginger and merlasses!"

The words were uttered in a quick, stern voice. Seizing the girl's hand, the hunter drew her behind a huge oak, not a moment too soon. There was a crash and a bullet whizzed past the tree.

"Don't yer stir from hyar before I come back!" cried the hunter; "not fer yer life!"

So saying, he quitted her, and keeping himself concealed by the shrubbery, moved to the distance of a hundred yards, then, turning suddenly into another line of bushes branching off, with swift, noiseless steps stole upon Minniho, who was creeping away.

"Thunder and lightnin'!" exclaimed Killb'ar, seizing her by the shoulder and snatching her rifle; "what yer mean by sich work, not at all accordin' to Christi'n principles?"

"White-face girl must die."

"No sich thing! you are ahead o' time. Why, ef it isn't Minnie-hello! I know yer now and understand. Jealousy regardin' Moscow are at the bottom of this 'ere work!"

"The white dove carries Omoski's heart in her claws!" cried the girl, gritting her teeth.

"Bah, she aren't got any claws. Ef yer war to see Suke Spoon, now, yer might talk about claws, seein' as hern are like a b'ar's; she kin scratch an' pull powerful. I've seen her pull up a tree by the root, and when wantin' firewood, split a board with her nails."

"Give rifle."

"Ef yer'll promise not to shoot Lucy. I know I kin rely on yer word."

"Rifle! rifle!" cried the girl, stamping her foot impatiently.

"Come, now! whar's the use of this jealousy? Lucy cares nothin' for Moscow, and you jist believe me when I tell yer he'll soon git over his fancy. Ef you understood human natur' you'd know that you are the one he are arter, in reality. I know it, ef you don't."

"How know?"

"I heerd him, while asleep, pernounce the name of Minnie-hello one hundred and forty-five times."

She knew that he exaggerated; still she felt convinced by what he had said, that Omoski had once or twice pronounced her name, or the hunter would not have thought of it.

The information subdued her at once.

"Give rifle; promise not to shoot," she said, her eyes glistening.

Killb'ar at once surrendered the weapon, advising the girl to get back to her tribe.

She quitted him without reply. He returned to Lucy, informed her of what had passed, and persuaded her to return to the settlement.

Back to the woods again, he met Omoski.

He said nothing to him of the presence of Minniho, thinking she would rather not have it known as yet. He however informed him of what he had seen in the valley.

"Yer people will attack the settlement. Do you intend to jine them or to foller me?"

"Omoski must go west."

"Come on, then."

"The white dove will sing in time. She will sing for some other than Omoski," murmured the Indian, as he proceeded.

"You are jealous, Moscow. Suke Spoon war once jealous o' me because I looked at a gal while I war a-walkin' with her. Thunder! she jist gave one screech, jumped cl'ar over the top of the gal's head and went to tearin' her caliker dress into a thousand pieces."

"The voice of the white-face girl is sweeter than a bird in the mulberry-tree. Her eyes softer than the dew on its wing."

"Thar, Moscow, that's poultry ag'in. Her voice are sweeter than Suke Spoon's, but that's Minnie-hello's, which are as sweet. You'd bet-

ter love the Indian gal. Ef you will, I'll make yer a present of as nice a pile of buffeler-meat as ever went down yer gizzard."

CHAPTER V.

KILLB'AR ON THE RAMPAGE.

THE news that Indians were hovering round the settlement had alarmed many of the inhabitants—among them Lucy's uncle—who were now packing up to start at once for a stronger post further west.

By ten o'clock they set out, the party consisting of six mounted women, all married except Lucy, and half a dozen stalwart men, well armed.

Many glances of pity and admiration were directed toward Lucy Ward, whose little black riding-hat with its green feather matched well with the sad, beautiful face.

The party had proceeded about thirty miles by sundown, and were hurrying on, when a man who had been riding in advance, was seen coming with hand elevated, as a signal to halt.

"There are Injuns ahead!"

Several half-suppressed cries of affright were heard among the women, some of whom turned their horses' heads as if to seek safety in flight.

"We'd better halt and keep a good guard."

Several of the party plunged into the brush on either side, to reconnoiter.

Meanwhile all were uneasy, as their situation was favorable for an attack. They occupied a clearing in the woods, while ahead of them was a deep valley, into which a torrent rushing with impetuous roar, must have drowned the noise of an approaching foe.

The heavens were rapidly growing dark, foreboding a storm. A large tent was hastily erected, and not a moment too soon, for, ere long, down fell the rain in torrents, the wind howled, the thunder roared, the lightning flashed almost incessantly.

Night came, and still the scouts remained absent. The women, in one corner of the tent, were huddled together like frightened sheep, while in another the men kept their weapons dry for emergency.

Suddenly there was a crash, louder than any previously heard.

"A tree struck by lightning," said a man who had been stationed on guard, near the valley. "Do you hear that roaring noise?" he added; "that is the torrent which has swollen. If it don't stop soon it will overflow the valley."

"Hark! what was that?"

The crack of a rifle was heard, then followed a wild scream like that of a man in mortal agony.

"Ker-whoop! Thunder, what a storm! Spose we git into this hollow tree, which are big enough to hold us both, ef we can squeeze in."

Killb'ar and his companion had penetrated deep into the recesses of the forest, where the storm broke upon them. It kept increasing, so that they were in danger from the falling branches of the trees.

As Killb'ar spoke, both advanced toward the hollow tree, an oak of huge dimensions.

Suddenly the hunter whispered quickly:

"I reckon we'd better not git into that 'are tree."

"Why?"

"Thar's a red skunk thar!"

Omoski lifted his rifle.

"Not so fast, young hoss. Yer mind are so full of that white-face girl that yer don't know what ye are about half the time. That are always the way with them as is love-sick."

"What going to do? Indian in tree no see us."

"No, but ef I ain't mistaken, he hev heard us, and are a-layin' in wait to brain us. His head bein' way up in the tree, his eyes ain't sharp enough to see through that trunk. Once, when I war intently excited, I see' el'ar through a walnut trunk six inches thick, but that war a pecoolier circumstance, as I war a boy at the time, a-runnin' away from the school-teacher, as war a-goin' to whack me with a buffeler-hide."

So saying, Killb'ar moved forward, followed by his companion, walking straight past the tree. To do this certainly required nerve, as the Indian's tomahawk might easily have brained the two while their backs were turned toward the tree.

Not a breath, however, issued from the trunk.

"Now I'll show yer a trick," said Killb'ar, as he cautiously approached the tree from behind.

Having reached it, he threw himself down, and whirling suddenly round in front of it,

grasped the Indian by the legs, pulling him out of the hollow!

To his surprise, the red-man—a Cree—uttered not a word, but lay motionless where he had fallen.

"Thunder! hyar's a circumstance I never heard of before. An Injun non-combatant. It must be that the Quakers has converted this 'ere skunk."

As he spoke, a lightning-flash revealed the eyes apparently fixed, and a blue spot like paint upon the forehead.

"Ginger and merlasses! I see inter this. The red-skin hev been struck by lightnin'. Look at this 'ere tree."

Glancing upward, the Indian had noticed what had so long escaped the attention of the two, that the tree was ripped and shattered in many places.

Omoski followed a short distance the plowed ground into which the lightning had passed. He was still inspecting it, when he was suddenly startled by a cry behind him.

"Ker-whoop! Thunder!"

Turning, his astonishment may be imagined, when, by a brief flash, he beheld the supposed dead Indian upon one knee, his hand on Killb'ar's throat, his glittering tomahawk upraised to cleave the skull of the man whom he had so adroitly taken by surprise.

The young chief lifted his rifle, and, taking good aim, fired, when, with a yell of agony, up jumped the Indian several feet in the air, and fell dead.

This was the noise which had been heard by the settlers encamped in the clearing.

"Good shot!" cried Killb'ar, jumping up, "and I thank yer for it. Thar'll be other red-skins pouncin' upon us on account of the noise, though. So we'd better cl'ar the way."

As he spoke, he suddenly leaned forward, and a lightning-flash pointed out the heads of several Indians protruded above the shrubbery skirting the valley, which was on the left of the two.

"Thunder! and thar are white men," continued the hunter, as the settlers, alarmed by the report of the rifle, rushed from the tent, making their way to the edge of the valley.

As they stood grasping their rifles firmly, the whizzing of arrows and the crack of several rifles were heard.

One of the white men fell dead, when, with terrific yells up started the dusky warriors as if by magic.

"To horse!" shouted the little party of whites, as they retreated, firing upon their foes. "To horse—there in the tent."

The women were either too terrified, or from devotion were unwilling to desert their husbands at such a moment.

All, however, rushed to the bower in which, revealed by the light of a lantern, hung where the shrubbery was thickest, were the horses. The retreating men, when they reached the tent, finding its fair occupants gone, judged that they had made off as directed to do.

Taking, therefore, to their heels, they plunged into the shrubbery and ran for their lives.

A portion of the Indians pursued, the rest found their way to the bower and threw themselves upon the women there huddled together like so many frightened sheep.

In a few moments five of the poor creatures were gasping out their lives upon the wet ground.

The remaining one, Lucy Ward, had thrown herself down beside her horse, which she had been unable to loose from the sapling to which it was attached, and with clasped hands was praying.

Whether it was owing to her extreme beauty, or that they could not decide whether to kill or make her a prisoner, certain it is that the red-men, as they closed round her, hesitated to strike.

There they stood, hideously revealed in their terrible war-paint, around one defenseless girl, their tomahawks elevated high above the bright head.

A few hasty words were exchanged; then one of the Indians, catching the girl by her long hair, drew back to inflict the deadly blow.

Bang! cr-r-ack! whi-z-z!

"Ker-whoop! yer skunks! Stars and cata-mounds! Thunder and lightnin'!"

CHAPTER VI.

OMOSKI'S BRAVE FRIEND.

KILLB'AR and Omoski, on bearing the shrieks of women, had hurried forward to render assistance.

The tangled shrubbery impeding their progress, and the work of slaughter having been

quickly accomplished, they had not approached within sight of the bower until the five women had fallen beneath their savage foes.

At sight of the Indian about to strike Lucy Ward, Killb'ar had fired, sending a bullet through the red-man's heart, while Omoski, with equal promptitude, perceiving that the savages were Crees, had shot the one by his side.

Springing into the bower, with a determination to save Lucy or die with her, both men must have fallen before being able to force the girl away, but for a circumstance as natural as it was fortunate.

At sight of the Indians, the horses had neighed with affright and commenced to kick; at the crashing of the two rifles, so close to their ears, their motions had become still more violent. Rearing and plunging they now swerved to one side, forming a barrier between the Crees and the two intruders, who had drawn the girl toward them.

"Myar now, my poor little one!" exclaimed Killb'ar; "hyar's a chance fur yer to escape! Away yer go, like a streak, and jist make tracks back to the settlement."

So saying, he with his knife severed the rein, and lightly tossed Lucy upon the back of a horse, which, with one tremendous bound, cleared the bower and dashed off like the wind!

Omoski and Killb'ar were each about springing upon another horse, when an Indian, who had crawled forward, grasped the white man by the leg, while another, throwing himself upon Omoski, thrust him out of the bower, engagin'g with him in a desperate struggle.

Killb'ar drove his knife into his adversary's breast; then, springing out of the bower before the others could overtake him, he knocked down with his clubbed rifle the savage fighting with Omoski, thus enabling the latter to retreat.

The white hunter and the chief's son started off in different directions through the shrubbery, just as the other Indians, having got clear of the horses, came rushing out of the bower with a loud yell.

Favored by the imperfect light of the storm-flashes, Killb'ar hastened along; then, suddenly crawling aside, lay perfectly motionless behind a fallen tree.

His enemies had started in pursuit, and in a few moments he saw them rush past him.

He was about rising to his knees to crawl in the direction where Omoski had disappeared, when, by a flash, he noticed the faces of three Indians right ahead of him, not more than fifty feet distant.

They were pushing the bushes aside and peering into them.

The same flash which had shown them to him had, Killb'ar doubted not, revealed his own person to them. There was no noise, it was true, but that was a circumstance to confirm his suspicions.

Turning, he therefore made off in a direction opposite to the one previously intended, hurrying along with the speed of a snake.

Soon he found himself on the edge of the valley, which was thickly skirted with shrubbery. He kept on until he was close to the swollen torrent. This had become so great that it was now filling the valley and must soon overflow it. As Killb'ar paused, he felt the water creeping above his ankles.

"This are a pesky bad state of affairs!" he muttered; "can't go back, can't go forward! Thunder! JIST LOOK THAR!"

The stream, rushing impetuously on, had washed away a huge mass of loose earth, and now, with the roar of an avalanche, was pouring into the valley at a rate which must FILL IT IN A SHORT TIME!

The hunter crawled up the side of the hollow a few paces, then ran along it with the speed of a deer, his body being now exposed to his pursuers. Several arrows whizzed past his head—two more grazed his temple, coming from ahead of him! Glancing round him by the electric light, Killb'ar perceived that he was being hemmed in, his enemies approaching from three sides—the torrent holding him in check on the other.

"It's all up with me, I sart'ainly think," muttered Killb'ar. "Thar'll be no person left to mourn me exceptin' Suke Spoon, who will feel sorry she persecuted me so, when she hears of my ontimely fate."

As he spoke, the hunter, shaking his head, felt it come in contact with a swaying branch.

Glancing up, he discovered that the branch, which was a slender one, drooped downward from a huge oak.

This inspired him with a happy thought. As

his enemies came closing in upon him, he caught the swaying branch and swung himself to the other side of the valley; then cut the branch short off, that the savages might not avail themselves of this convenient "pendulum."

Plunging into the recesses of the forest, he kept on until after midnight, walking in a zig-zag direction, and now and then burying his trail in a stream, so as to baffle the Indians, who walking along the overflowed valley, would doubtless continue the pursuit.

Afterward he took the back trail, moving at right angles with his former course, hoping he might eventually fall in with Lucy Ward, or at least with Omoski.

Finally he came to a cave, where he concluded to halt for the night. Spreading his bear-skin, he slept soundly until morning.

When he waked the storm was over and the sun was shining brightly. The leaves, glittering with rain-drops, resembled jeweled drinking-cups, and the birds made music all through the woods. Killb'ar rose, shook himself, and moved on. Walking swiftly, while keeping a wary eye around him, he suddenly heard a rustling ahead.

The next moment he found himself face to face with Omoski, who stepped forth from behind a tree.

"Good-mornin', Moscow! Glad to see yer with whole bones!"

"Glad see again," said Omoski. "Seen white dove?"

"Ef yer mean Lucy Ward, no. I am mighty consarned for that poor gal."

"So I. Heard scream in night. Seem to come from here."

"Heerd a screech? Well, that 'are must have been while I war asleep. Yer say it come from hyarabouts?"

"Yes."

"Then thar's no mistake about poor Lucy bein' caught by some red varmint. We must look her up, Injun, before we keep on our journey west."

The young Indian's step was light as he followed his guide.

The two had not proceeded far, however, when the Indian pointed toward a hill upon their left.

There Killb'ar caught a glimpse of Lucy's horse, dashing ricerless over the brow of the elevation.

"I must find out whar the gal is," said the hunter. "You, Moscow, kin keep straight on toward the west, and I'll jine yer before long, by follerin' up yer trail."

"I go too," replied Omoski. "Can not rest till know if white bird safe."

He followed Killb'ar, who, quickly turning to the left, struck into the shrubbery in that direction.

Suddenly hearing the sound of hasty footsteps ahead of him, the hunter paused, his rifle held ready. The next moment, bursting from the shrubbery, appeared a tall athletic Indian, making off with Lucy Ward in his arms. The girl was vainly endeavoring to disengage herself, when her captor drew his tomahawk, as if concluding to put an end to her struggles at once.

"What an ongallant skunk! Hyer's a pill to larn yer better manners!"

Up went his rifle, and he was about pulling the trigger, when a hollow murmuring noise saluted his ears, and down sunk the savage, with Omoski's tomahawk in his brain!

As the stricken one fell, there was a terrific yell behind him from nearly a dozen hideous-looking Indians, who now appeared from the thick brushwood!

Killb'ar's mind was made up in a moment. Dashing forward, he caught Lucy in his arms, and hurried off with her as if she were a mere child.

Speeding on he entered a valley, to find himself sinking to his waist in a marsh:

He clutched a log, deposited his burden thereon, and was about drawing himself out, when he heard a sort of hiss above his head!

Glancing up, he beheld his pursuers glaring down at him from the summit of a rock!

Three had lifted their tomahawks to hurl them, the rest had pointed their rifles.

"Thunder!" cried Killb'ar, "it are all up with me! Ef yer see Suke Spoon, tell her that I forgive her her many persecutions of me, as a Christ'in should. And now blaze away, only don't hurt the gal!"

Lucy, half unconscious, clung to the log, right in range of rifles and tomahawks. Killb'ar, therefore, made several desperate efforts, and finally succeeded in bringing himself to the left of the girl.

"Now, then, be keerful to just hit only me!" Bang! went the rifles—whiz! went the tomahawks.

Killb'ar threw up one of his arms, and fell back into the swamp!

Yelling exultantly, the savages, clambering down the side of the rock, were approaching Lucy when a nimble form suddenly came swinging to her side from the branch of a tree, drooping above the log.

It was Omoski!

He had climbed the tree, and ran out upon the branch with the speed of a squirrel, then sliding to the middle, had dropped just after the rifles were discharged.

Catching up the girl, he made off with her like an arrow, darting along the log into the thicket bordering the other side of the valley. Soon he reached the foot of the hill where Lucy's horse had been seen. The hill was steep and rocky in some places, but Omoski did not hesitate. The yells of his pursuers, close behind him, urged him swiftly up the ascent, from one rocky parapet of which, crowned by a huge blasted tree, he perceived he might, for a while at least, keep his pursuers at bay.

Heedless of Lucy's struggles to release herself, he finally gained the elevation.

"Let the white dove crouch down," he then said in tender accents; "Omoski will die for her!"

He released her, when Lucy turned to flee.

This, however, was rendered impossible by a steep rock in front of her, which she could not scale, and which must be climbed before she could reach the path which her horse had descended. The shouts of the savages excited feelings of horror and aversion. She crouched instinctively, her head half turned over her shoulder toward Omoski, who, kneeling, held his bow ready, the barbed arrow fixed to be sent into the midst of his foes.

Soon the Indians appeared emerging from the brushwood at the foot of the hill. On they came, the foremost to fall pierced by an arrow from the bow of Lucy's defender. Quickly he set another shaft, while his voice rolled down the hill like hollow thunder.

"Back! or all die! The eagle will save the white dove!"

A defiant yell was the response, when whiz! went another arrow, and down went another Cree!

Four were now left. Straight toward the rocky parapet they advanced, two of them armed with rifles. By ascending the rock they might now reach Omoski, but there was, in the fire of his eye, a something which made them hesitate.

Only for a moment. The next, grasping stunted roots growing from crevices in the side of the rock, they commenced the ascent, being now sheltered from Omoski's arrow or bullet, by the outward projecting of the rock's ribbed sides.

Now the meaning of that strange fire in the young chief's eyes, was explained. Grasping the broken trunk of the tree, he pushed upon it, by a single effort of his tremendous strength, sending it thundering down the side of the rock!

The result was as anticipated. The massive trunk, striking the ascending Crees, sent them tumbling headlong to the foot of the rock, where they lay bruised and unconscious with the tree upon them.

"Come," said Omoski, now seizing the arm of the young girl, "the eagle will fly away with the dove. She shall yet love him and sing for him in his wigwam."

Lucy heard him not; she was senseless.

He caught her up in one arm, scaled the rugged rock in front of them with the help of his gunsling, gained the hill-path and hurried off.

Running along with the speed of a deer, he finally came to a small cave in a moss-covered bank near the stream, where he deposited his burden.

From the shrubbery near this cave—unseen—unheard by Omoski, a light form glided away with bowed head and heaving bosom.

It was Minniho!

Poor child! At sight of her lover with the white maiden in his arms, she had resolved to think no more of the false man.

Alas! Minniho was a simple forest-girl, whose love impulses were stronger than her pride. She had not learned the art of keeping her feelings crushed, hidden, like flowers under stones.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OLD GUIDE'S CHARGE.

As may be imagined, Killb'ar's falling back into the swamp when the Indians fired, was a

more feint to deceive them with the idea that he had been hit.

With his head hidden by the marshy reeds, projecting on all sides of him, he drew himself round the end of the log to the other side, holding on by a half-decayed branch, projecting from the lower part.

He had hardly done this when a few of the Indian party—the rest having, as shown, gone in pursuit of Omoski—clambered to the log and peered through the reeds.

Not seeing anything of Killb'ar except his heels, which projected on this side of the log, they concluded that he had sunk, head downward, into the soft mire.

Very willing they should think so, Killb'ar remained motionless, hardly daring to breathe and hoping that the red-men would not look on his side of the log. In fact the Indians, after a moment's hurried consultation, seemed to conclude to depart. They were about turning away, when an unlucky accident changed their purpose.

This was the breaking of the branch by which Killb'ar supported himself, the snapping noise at once attracting the attention of the savages. The hunter had caught a projection on the end of the log, by which he now kept himself from sinking into the soft mire, being still screened from sight by the broad reeds growing round him.

From this position, through openings among the leaves, he could see his enemies pushing aside the grass to discover the source of the noise heard. They could not see him, owing to his head being in the shadow, while he could plainly detect every movement of theirs.

Suddenly one of them advanced so close to his position, that their two heads came almost into contact. The hunter nearly dislocated his neck, with the efforts he made to twist his head out of reach of the searcher's keen eyes. A moment later the Indian turned his glances full upon Killb'ar, when the eyes of the two met.

Killb'ar, perceiving he was discovered, quietly thrust his head above the log, and in a voice something like a frog's, thus addressed the astonished spectators:

"Good-afternoon, gentlemen! This are a bad place for a Christi'n!"

"Ugh! quick kill!" exclaimed the Indian, raising his tomahawk.

"Jist wait one minute, won't yer, and give a feller time to eat somethin'. Dying on an empty stomach are onpleasant fur a hoosier."

The Indian would not wait.

Down came his tomahawk, striking with a dull crash—the log.

Killb'ar, raising himself, had knocked aside the descending arm. Then, springing upon the log, he pushed the red-man back into the swamp, and planting one foot upon his body, leaped a distance of five feet to dry land, while the others were running toward him along the log.

Unfortunately, his foot catching in some twisted grass, he fell prostrate. Before he could rise the Indians were upon him, their deadly weapons lifted.

"Before you take my ha'r," exclaimed the hunter, "I'll unburden my mind to yer. Jist tell that chap Moscow, ef you ever see him—"

The nearest Indian did not seem inclined to bear him finish the sentence. He was about striking when there was a scream, and a light form bounding from the thicket caught the descending arm so that the weapon just grazed the hunter's temple.

The Indians looked up with a grunt to behold standing in their midst the beautiful Minniho!

"Thunder! you've saved my life, Injun beyooty. Nothin' like this ever happened to me before, except one time, t'other side of the mount'ins. Thar I fell cl'ar over a precipice one hundred feet high, and war about to hev my life destroyed by some wild hogs, when Suke Spoon cum along and driv the critters away with a saucepan."

Meanwhile the Indians surveyed the girl several moments without speaking. The fame of her beauty having traveled far, all present at once recognized her.

An alliance had lately been entered into between Crees and Cherokees, therefore the former were inclined to hear with courteous deference the wishes of the Indian maiden. A brief conversation now ensued, and Kilib'ar knew that the girl was pleading for his life. He heard her say that he (Killb'ar) had once saved Omoski from death. The Crees had all heard of Omoski, but many of them had never seen him. Those in pursuit of him had mistaken him for a Seminole on account of his beautiful gar'a.

"Come," said Minniho at length, motioning to Killb'ar, "white man free now; if Cree see him afterward, he must die."

He followed the girl, who led him toward a pretty grove. There she paused and bowed her head, sighing.

"It is done. Omoski is lost to his tribe. Lost to Minniho forever! He has turned again from the setting sun, to listen to the white bird."

"Cheer up, gal; thar's time enuff yet. Ef I can find him, I'll try powerful hard to lug him along with me ag'in, toward the quarters of the Red B'ar. It ain't sich a very long journey from hyar," added Killb'ar, as he wiped the mud from his rifle.

"He will not hear you; the white girl has bewitched his heart."

She spoke in a said voice, her eyes fixed upon the stream rushing past.

"Cheer up, I tell yer. Why, thar war a gal I once knowed, which war arter a chap about my size. She thort he war arter another gal, when one day what does he do but jist comes to the gal's house a-luggin' the minister along by the ha'r of the head to marry him to the very gal that thort he warn't arter her. Ker-whoop! didn't she holler with joy? I war huntin' forty miles off, and heerd the screechin' the hull distance. Arterwards she sent me a piece of the weddin'-cake, detached to the horn of a tame buffeler, which she had brought up as one of the family."

"Omoski never come to Minniho!" murmured the girl, sadly. "She may sit in her lodge and sing all day, but she is only a black bird, and the eagle will not come. Go, white man, go. If see Omoski, tell that Minniho trouble him no more."

"What yer mean? You are not goin' to sever yer mortal ties, I hope."

She answered not, but with a sad wave of the hand and one glance of her black eyes, vanished in the woods.

Kilio'ar looked after her a moment, then shouldered his rifle and hurried toward the hill from which the Indian warrior had defended his charge.

Discovering the trail, he followed it, and by night found himself opposite to the mossy retreat in which the Indian had deposited Lucy. The young girl was now refusing to give any encouragement to the love of the warrior, who stood before her, asking her to fly with him to some distant retreat, far away, where neither white man nor Indian would be apt to molest them. He would give her the choicest deer-flesh for food, dress her in the prettiest skins, and bring her plenty of presents from the hunt.

"Hello thar? What yer doin'? Don't yer feel ashamed, Moscow, to be caught a-makin' love to this gal, when thar's a poor little clay-colored critter of your own tribe a-bu'stin' her heart in two for yer. Ginger and merlasses!" added Killb'ar, throwing down his rifle from sheer vexation. "It's enuff to set a Christi'n to weepin', to see how mankind is alers arter her as is the least declined to be arter *himself*."

"Whence came the white man? His foot is light. He stole upon us like a fallen star."

"B'ars and buffelers, Moscow! Now don't yer insult me with any more of yer infarnal poultry. I ain't a fallen star, but jist a plain Injun and coon hunter, as can chaw his meat as well as any white or red-skin livin'. Come, will yer go now with me arter the Red B'ar?"

The other, musing a moment, answered "Yes."

"First I must take this gal to the settlement," said Killb'ar. "Meantime you'd better hunt up Minnie-hello, which war in the thicket behind us, a moment since, and jist make up with her, tellin' her you intend to go after the Red B'ar, arter which you'll return and marry her. Then you may wait for me hyar. I'll be back in good time."

"It is well," answered the Indian.

Next morning he stood watching Killb'ar as he led the girl away. When the two were nearly out of sight he turned and followed them at a distance.

As they moved away, Lucy gave her hunter-friend an account of her adventures since the attack in the forest. She had dashed away upon her horse to the westward, had ridden all night, and at daylight had halted to think what she should do next, when several Indians sprung from the shrubbery near and pulled her from the steed. The horse, frightened, dashed away, when one of the Indians, seizing her in his arms made off with her as mentioned, probably intending to conduct her to his camp and make a slave of her.

"My poor little gal!" said the hunter. "You seem doomed to get yourself into a good many

unpleasant scrapes. I pity yer from the bottom of my heart, and hope yer'll find some one else to love."

"Speak not of that," said Lucy, her tears streaming. "I can never, never love another!"

"I war a brute to speak so. But I forgot that you are entirely different from the female hoosiers as I've seen. Many on 'em hev married six husbands. I know one who hev had fourteen, and is a-lookin' forwar'd to the time when she kin git another! Suke Spoon, whatever her other bad qualities, is different. That critter is faithful to only one, which one, unfortunately, are me!"

Lucy was about to speak, when Killb'ar held up his finger to her as a signal of silence, and glanced keenly along the ground. He could discover, by the appearance of the leaves, the traces of some Indian party having recently passed that way. The fresh look of the trail at once convinced him that the party could not be more than a mile distant at the most.

He therefore struck into another route, which he hoped might, by a roundabout way, lead him to the settlement, without falling in with the savages. So many years had elapsed since his visit to the place, however, that he anticipated no little trouble in finding it. Still he knew by the hill recently passed that it could not be more than twenty miles distant. The hill was a good landmark, but whether the settlement lay to the south-east or more to the eastward o' it, he could not tell. Cautiously yet swiftly keeping on, he finally came in sight of the settlement, which consisted of about forty log-houses, a block-house, a school, a church, and one grocery store.

"Thar!" muttered Killb'ar, breathing a sigh of relief. "Hyar we are, your troubles all dissipated, my poor little gal! Thar's a church whar yer can go and offer up thanksgivin' ef yer like."

Lucy smiled faintly.

"I thank you much, sir," she answered, "for your kindness; but I am very sad, and would have cared little had I lost my life on the way."

"You must not give way to sich feelin's, my poor gal. Them's called the blues, and thar war a time when I war troubled with the same. I jist cured myself by takin' a run to the top o' the mount'ins, then jumpin' c'lar down from a rock thirty foot high into a lake of cold water, after which I eat three pounds of buffeler-meat, which cured me in a powerful short time. Thar's nothin' like exercise to take away bad feelin's of all kinds. Thar war a peddler chap which cheated me once. I started arter him, trampin' forty miles in as many minutes. When I got up to the peddler chap, the exercise had taken away all my bad feelin's, so that arter jist knockin' the feller down three or four times, I war ready to shake hands with him ef he hadn't scooted!"

By noon they had struck into a path leading straight toward a settlement. To get there the two must first descend into a hollow, fringed with thick shrubbery. Killb'ar having reached this line of shrubbery, was about pushing it aside that Lucy might pass it first, when he suddenly paused, motioning the girl back.

In the hollow, crouching down upon hands and knees, he beheld more than a hundred and fifty savages, all armed to the teeth!

CHAPTER VIII. AN INSECURE ROOST.

As Killb'ar gazed upon this unwelcome spectacle, he concluded to strike to the left with the girl, and endeavor, by making his way through the brushwood, to get round to the settlement. Knowing, however, that the Indians must have scouts stationed in that direction, he resolved to wait until night before making the attempt. Lightly stepping back, the hunter thrust his ramrod in the ground, and listened intently with his ear applied to the upper end.

"Do you hear anything?" inquired Lucy.

"Yes; thar are other Indians approaching. They will be upon us in a short time ef we keep on as we are a-going."

He struck to the eastward to give the valley and the approaching savages a wide berth, but he had not proceeded far before he again paused, once more using the ramrod.

"B'ars and buffelers! thar's skunks comin' this way, too! We're surrounded!"

"What shall we do?"

"We kin do nothin'," answered the hunter, as he proceeded to strew a few leaves, so as to conceal the prints of Lucy's and his feet upon the soft ground, "except to climb one of these trees," pointing at a stupendous, white-leaved oak, the trunk of which was almost concealed by enwreathing vines, while the branches above

were so closely interwoven as to form a screen like a basket-work. "Kin yer climb?"

Lucy blushed at this question, answering that she was not used to climbing trees.

"I mought hev known it. You eastern gals ain't like our western hoosier women, which kin climb bootifully! Now, fer instance, thar's Suke Spoon, which kin go up a tree like a winged elephant."

So saying, the hunter proceeded to pull down some of the vines clinging to the tree. Having obtained several, he soon constructed a rude ladder, by twisting and tying the twigs together.

He then climbed into a lofty branch, holding to the trailing ladder with his teeth, and fastened it to the limb. Then he descended, and keeping the ladder steady, requested the girl to mount it. Lucy obeyed, and finally reached the branch in safety. Killb'ar soon joined her, when, pulling up the ladder, he coiled it and secured it to a branch far up above his head.

"This 'ere consarn," he said, as he assisted the girl higher up into the midst of the natural screen-work, "this are somethin' like the ark of bulrushes spoken of in the Bible. You'll pass for the baby, Miss Lucy, and ef I war only of the female sect, the likeness would be almost perfect."

Lucy was unable to trace the resemblance, but she said nothing.

Meanwhile Killb'ar, keeping a sharp look-out through the screen-work, soon beheld the foremost of the Indian party approaching. They evidently were scouts from the larger party in the hollow.

All, with the exception of five Cherokees, were Crees, looking hideous in their paint and fierce attire. As they moved along in single file past the tree, the hunter watched them keenly, to see if they would discover the traces of himself and Lucy, through the leaves on the ground.

The Indians did not, however, perceive any thing to excite their suspicions, and moved straight on toward the hollow.

Suddenly, when they had all passed, Lucy beheld her companion turn pale and draw a long breath.

What was the matter? What could happen to thus affect a man whom no danger hitherto had seemed capable of intimidating.

She watched in surprise the hunter who, taking out his handkerchief, wiped big drops of perspiration from his forehead, while now and then ejaculating, almost under his breath:

"Thunder! ef it ain't! Yes it are! Ginger and merlasses!—kin it be posseble! I mought hev known it! Phew! ker-whoop!"

"Hark!" said Lucy. "I think I hear a step approaching!"

"You do! yes, yer do! I kin hear that step thar forty miles off, and reconize it too! Oh thunder! Oh lightnin'! Thar's mischief brewin'!"

Soon after he spoke, another party of Indians appeared, having between them two prisoners. One was a tall man, so muffled up in a blanket that his face could not be seen; the other a woman, nearly five feet nine inches in height. She wore a flaming calico short-waisted robe, a head-dress something like an elevated nightcap, a pair of thick, heavy cowhide shoes, and carried, strapped to her back on a small knapsack, a tin cup, a coffee-pot, and an iron teakettle. Her face was rather of the masculine order, being broad in the region of destructiveness, while her cheeks were of a rough and ready crimson brown, betokening a high state of health. Although her arms were tied, and there was a fierce-looking savage on each side of her, yet she carried her head upright, with a fearless air, and marched as straight as a soldier.

Killb'ar now trembled in every limb, watching the female keenly until she had passed, when he whispered to Lucy:

"It are her, sure enough! I'm sar'tin of that now. Oh thunderation! Oh ginger! Kin it be possible it are, and yet I know it are! That woman you saw, my little gal, are the one arter me, the hoosier female, SUKE SPOON!"

"A prisoner among the Indians?"

"Yes. Thar's nothin' like a woman's devotion. That 'are have tramped it all the way from t'other side of the Rocky Mountains, jist fur the sake of follerin' one as can't return her affeckshun!"

"Poor thing!" sighed Lucy. "She has got herself into great peril!"

"I s'pose," said Killb'ar, the perspiration now fairly streaming from his brow, "I s'pose, as she are a woman, I'm bound to try my best and save her, though I don't see how it's to be done!"

"Leave me and go to *her*," said Lucy.

"Wagh! Thunder! Ef I do may I be shot! No, I'm afraid the poor critter will hev to lose her b'ar!"

"Would you not be willing to die for one who loves you so? Why not leave me and attempt her rescue?"

"I kin never do that. Hello! Who hev we hyar?"

A couple of half-breeds, with axes, were approaching from the direction of the hollow.

"They're goin' to fight on sign-terrific principles, Miss Lucy. Goin' to git batterin'-rams. You kin jist believe that. Thar's to be some tree-choppin' to-day!"

The half-breeds came within a few yards of the tree; then paused, glancing around them as if to determine which to commence at. Finally chance would have it that they should chop at the one in which were seated Lucy and Killb'ar, for this, having the largest branches, was the best adapted to their purpose.

"Hyar we are in a kind of a scrape, my little gal!" whispered the hunter. I war in somethin' sich a one by myself, years ago, when I war Injin'-huntin' out in Kentucky. Jist as the tree war chopped down, though, thar came up a high wind, which, with the help of my buffeler-skin, sent me a-whizzin' cl'ar over the top o' the woods to t'other side."

The half-breeds having commenced at the tree, the ring of their axes drowned the sound of the hunter's voice.

"What can we do now?" inquired Lucy. "Here come more Indians, probably to help drag the tree to the hollow."

"You're right. Ef ever head-work war re quir'd, it are now!"

He glanced round him keenly.

"We will have to give ourselves up," said Lucy. "There is no evil without the good. You will have the satisfaction of seeing Suke Spoon."

Killb'ar trembled.

"Phew! Thunder! Ef she once gets her claws on me she'll hev satisfaction!"

Crash! crack! bang! at the trunk of the tree. The axes were making quick work of it. Already the tree began to tremble.

"It'll go in two minutes," said Killb'ar, coolly.

"We had better give ourselves up, then."

"No. Leastways, not while Suke Spoon are among the Injuns!" answered Killb'ar, again wiping his brow.

Crash! crack! bang! bang!

The tree tottered still more. Finally it gave evidences of going over in a few seconds.

Killb'ar sprung to his feet. Two more blows must send the tree over.

The blows were given.

"Thar we go!" muttered the hunter. "HOLD ON HARD, MISS LUCY!"

CHAPTER IX.

A MAIDEN'S DEVOTION.

OMOSKI, as mentioned, had followed behind Killb'ar and his companion.

Through an opening in the trees, Minniho, after quitting Killb'ar, beheld, from a rock upon which she had seated herself, the tall form of her lover, far in the distance, speeding in the same direction as the hunter and the girl.

"Omoski! Omoski!"

The words came from her in a sad wail. Then she rose.

"Once more Minniho will try. Already it is the sixth day since his departure. There is little hope."

She bounded after the Indian wanderer, and had nearly gained his side, when she beheld, crouching in the shrubbery, a warrior of the Cree tribe, whose bow was bent, and whose arrow was pointed at Omoski. The man's face was partly turned from her, yet she recognized him as Erigo. Bent upon vengeance, Erigo had a second time concluded to hunt for, and slay, his rival, the favored suitor of Minniho. He had searched for him long, and at last here he was, right before him.

The girl, bent upon saving her lover, bounded forward like a deer, uttering a wild cry. But she was too late to arrest the shaft, but not too late to receive it.

Poor Minniho!

The arrow struck her side, inflicting a severe wound.

Over the blood-stained shaft she threw her mantle, so that when Omoski, hearing the noise, turned, he saw the Indian girl coming toward him, with no sign of pain upon her beautiful face!

Ashamed to be caught thus in a covert attempt on his rival's life, Erigo, dashing past the girl,

confronted the young chief before she could reach him.

"Dog, dis!" he said, drawing his tomahawk.

"Why should the Cree and the Cherokee fight?" inquired Omoski. "The hatchet is buried."

"Fight for Minniho! You have stolen her from Erigo!"

"Omoski does not want Minniho's love!"

"Lie!"

The young warrior drew his tomahawk; a desperate fight seemed about to ensue.

On ordinary occasions the Indian maiden would not have interfered. Now, however, the case was different. She was anxious that her lover should at least return to his tribe in time for the battle which was to take place.

Therefore, throwing herself between the two, she, with flashing eyes, turned to the Cree, bidding him depart.

"Some other time the fight," she said; "not now. Go!"

The Cree returned his tomahawk to his belt, and with hate rankling in his heart, turned away.

Minniho laid both hands on her lover's shoulder, and gazed sadly and reproachfully into his eyes.

"Omoski goes toward the east. The sixth day is come!"

"Yes! Omoski thinks no more of the Red Bear!"

"The tribe will say he has turned coward," said the girl, pressing her mantle closer over her wound.

Fire came to Omoski's eyes. Those of Minniho beamed gladly. She believed that she had at last roused his spirit.

It was only for an instant. Again the eager glance softened. The white dove was in her lover's mind.

The girl sighed; then looked up, speaking beseechingly—energetically:

"See! The sun reddens westward! Omoski might almost keep pace with it! In one day he might reach the Red Bear's country!"

Again the warrior's eyes lighted; then his glance was turned eastward. Far away, through a vista in the woods, the forms of Lucy and Killb'ar were visible.

Minniho, watching her lover's countenance, saw it light up with the spell which the white maiden had thrown over his heart.

"Come!" she wailed, "come!"

She caught his arm, and endeavored gently to urge him westward. He would not move.

"So, as a coward, Omoski would go back to his tribe!" she said. "What will Manitou do then? Will Omoski go to his fathers' hunting-grounds when he dies? No, he will go to the dark place, where there is neither light nor joy!"

"He cares not, so the white bird lights his wigwam and fills his heart with sweet sounds!"

"Omoski!" said Minniho, solemnly, "I had a dream! Omoski's mother came to me from the grave! I saw her in the deep woods! She spoke twice! 'Oh, Minniho!' she said, 'Omoski must go to the west! Glory and honor on his return! The greatest warrior of all tribes! There is a white bird with small eye, which would turn him away! To follow the bird is death and dishonor! Let him not follow it, oh, Minniho!'"

These words seemed to have the desired effect. Omoski had loved his mother dearly, and the dream had great influence over him.

With delighted eyes, Minniho again beheld his face kindle.

Suddenly he straightened himself up.

"Omoski throws away the white bird's spell. See! he is ready to seek the Bear!"

The Indian girl clapped her hands—almost forgot her pain.

"Will Omoski go now?"

"He will wait at the stream for the white hunter's return. The hunter will guide him to the Bear before the morrow's sun shall set!"

"It is well! Oh, Minniho is glad!"

She had so much confidence in her lover's prowess, that she doubted not he would come off the victor.

They sought the stream, where, with a heavy sigh, Minniho seated herself. Then, for the first time, Omoski perceived that she was wounded.

His heart was touched by her noble fortitude. He pulled forth the arrow, washed the wound in the stream-water, and went forth bringing healing herbs.

Happy Minniho!

Her heart throbbed wildly, her glances, turned upon her lover, were full of absorbing tenderness.

The sun had wheeled far toward the west, when Minniho sunk into a deep, refreshing slumber.

Omoski sat watching her awhile, when again the bright beauty of the pale-face girl flitted athwart his vision.

Obeying the impulse of his heart, he arose and glided away, resolving to get one more glimpse of Lucy Ward, before turning his footsteps westward. He had proceeded many miles, when through the shrubbery ahead of him, he caught a glimpse of female attire.

His heart beat fast.

"It is the white bird!" he muttered; "why in the shrubbery? Is she asleep, or has she been slain?"

With trembling steps he cautiously advanced. The dress of the female being in shadow, he could not detect the color, but his heart told him the person was Lucy Ward.

Soon he gained the clump of shrubbery, and pulled it aside.

"Omoski would see the white dove once more!" he exclaimed.

The moment he put aside the bushes he discovered that he had made a singular mistake.

Wedged between two rocks, sitting bolt upright, her knapsack shining in the moonlight, her bonnet, with its yellow strings, pushed defiantly from her tow-colored hair, a gridiron held firmly in one hand and the iron tea-pot in the other, was the female Suke Spoon, grimly keeping watch and ward.

The Indians in the hollow had not maintained a very close watch upon her. She had managed to untie her cords and make her escape while their backs were turned. Now they were in pursuit of her. She had run until she was too tired to go further, and then sunk down in her present position to rest, having distanced her pursuers by strides which no Indian could equal.

Panting and glowing, she now turned her fierce eyes on Omoski.

"Hoo! hoo! hoo! yer red scamp, to insult a defenseless woman! Get eout! get eout! Take that, and don't try to come yer cooin' and billin' over Suke Spoon!"

As she spoke, she hurled the iron pot straight at the head of the Indian. He dodged it and stood watching her, shrugging his shoulders with disgust.

"Ugh! ugh!"

"They're all crazy arter me!" continued Suke Spoon, jumping up and striking a defiant attitude; "but I'll never be the wife of any Injun, livin' or dead! So that now!"

"No want wife! How come here?"

"That's none of yer bizness, Injun! You'd better keep yer distance," she added, flourishing the gridiron, "for I sw'ar I won't be taken alive!"

As she spoke, the footsteps of her pursuers were heard not far off.

"Hyar they come—all arter me! Well, I always war a fav'rite with the male sect. Look out, Injun!"

So saying, she stepped upon the rock, sprung straight over the Indian's head, and went crashing through the shrubbery.

Omoski gazed after her a moment, and then crouched down among the bushes, waiting for the pursuing Indians to pass him.

"Funny woman," he muttered, when they had gone, with every show of disgust. "Think all men in love with her. Ugh! make great mistake!"

CHAPTER X.

OLD SUKE'S CAVALIER.

WHEN Lucy Ward felt the tree going over, she clung closely to the branch, expecting every moment to be dashed to pieces below. Down went the tree, further and further! She closed her eyes, offered up a silent prayer, and nerved herself to meet her fate! All at once she felt the tree thump against something, and then stop.

She opened her eyes, to see Killb'ar grinning from ear to ear, pressing hard against the trunk near the branch where he stood!

It was the pressure of his weight which had caused the tree, instead of swaying toward the ground, to incline toward another, several yards distant, and against which it had struck and was now so firmly braced that many men must be required to move it.

The Indians turned away and sought the hollow, evidently to obtain assistance.

"That war a good trick of mine!" said Killb'ar; "but not a circumstance to one which I perpetrated t'other side of the mount'ins. Six Injuns bein' arter me on that occasion, I jist jumped from one tree to another which was

fifty yards off! It war a flyin' leap, and so amazed the Injuns that they throwed themselves right down on their bellies and began a-callin' on their Man-toe!"

"Had we not better go down and escape from here before they come back?"

"Jist wait one minute!" gasped Killb'ar, trembling and clutching his branch.

As he spoke, he gazed in the direction of the hollow, whence, with a crash like an elephant's, Suke Spoon suddenly was seen to emerge, fleeing from the savages.

The latter, not wishing to alarm the settlement, made no noise as they ran in pursuit; but the fugitive was not so careful.

"Yer pesky heathens!" she screamed; "you're all arter me, but yer won't hev me, seein' as I'm pleedged, buddy and soul, to Crockery, as has trifled with my affeckshuns!"

Suke Spoon's notion that the Indians wanted her for their squaw, had been excited by the earnest glances turned on her by more than one old savage after her capture, together with the fact that no violence had been offered her.

The Indians, as will be seen, had for this reasons of their own, not at all founded on affection.

Many cases of Indians falling in love with white girls had recently occurred, and having a high idea of her own charms, Suke was pleased to rank herself among the list of persecuted maidens.

Away she went, her bonnet-strings flying, making straight for the tree in which were seated Lucy and Killb'ar.

Just as she arrived beneath it, the foremost of her pursuers was within seven feet of her. She, however, must have easily escaped him, when her toes caught against a root, and down she went, her heels flying up.

At this, Killb'ar fairly gasped for breath. Nevertheless his gallantry was excited.

"She sart'inly are a woman!" he whispered to Lucy, "and it are my duty to do something for her!"

"What can you do?"

Killb'ar quietly pulled his long hunting-knife from his belt, and watched the foremost Indian as a cat watches a mouse.

The fellow was a hundred yards ahead of his companions, screened from their sight by the interposing brushwood between the hollow and the tree. Waiting until he was almost under him, Killb'ar, suddenly holding with each hand his knife by the handle and the point, dexterously sent it spinning downward, so that it was buried to the hilt in the throat of the savage.

As he had predicted, the Indian, with a wild cry, seized the knife, and pulling it out, hurled it away from him before he sunk dead upon the ground.

The amazement of the other savages when they arrived upon the spot to find their companion with a knife-wound in his throat and no person to be seen near him, may be imagined. It was the delay consequent upon this discovery that enabled Suke Spoon to get so far ahead, as shown, of her savage pursuers.

Having waited until after the Indians had vanished from his sight, Killb'ar concluded to descend to regain his knife. The maneuver was quickly performed, but just as Killb'ar was gliding into the screenwork, his quick eye detected the heads of several savages protruding above the sides of the hollow, and he knew that he was discovered.

To remain must insure the capture of Lucy as well as of himself; to flee would enable him to draw the Indians away from the tree, and perhaps afterward to render her assistance.

He, therefore, chose the latter alternative, thus giving his enemies the idea that he was the only person in the tree.

Having hastily communicated his intention to Lucy, he descended and made straight for the woods, the Indians following in swift pursuit.

Killb'ar, determined to keep as near the tree as possible, plunged into a creek in his path and swam under the intertwined roots of a tree, projecting over the water, and in the partial twilight forming a perfect screen. The savages reaching the bank of the creek, and there losing the trail, wandered at fault up and down the banks. Several times they passed so near the hunter that he could almost touch them. Finally, as darkness began to gather, the bank was deserted. Killb'ar was too experienced a hunter to venture forth yet. He waited an hour, cat-like watching the tree in which Lucy sat and which as yet had not been disturbed. He could see its topmost branches and part of the trunk through an opening in the woods.

At last he cautiously emerged from the creek.

As he did so, a dark figure rose between him and the moon!

"Yer infarnal skunk!"

And up went his knife.

"Ugh! Don't know!"

The moon fell upon the Indian's face, revealing the features of Omoski!

"Where is the white bird?"

Killb'ar instantly explained.

"Must try save. There are clouds enough on the white girl's spirit. Must not let more come."

"I agree with yer perfectly. I must try to get that gal to the settlement. Ef you go with me I kin do it. Your tribe, some of whom I see among a lot of Injuns in the hollow, will not harm the gal ef you say so. Still we must try to avoid 'em ef we kin!"

"Have to go long way round."

"That are so."

"Hope not see Yellow-string. Ugh!"

"Who in thunder are that?"

"Don't know! Red hair! big nose! fight—pot—grid-grid-grid—what you call?"

"Gridiron! Ginger and merlasses! yer mean that woman Suke Spoon! Hev yer seen her?"

"Yes."

And Omoski briefly explained.

The moon was now hidden by clouds.

"Come," said Killb'ar, creeping cautiously toward the tree. "Come! now is yer time!"

Gaining the foot of the tree, he whispered to Lucy to come down.

She did so, easily making her way down the inclined trunk.

"The white bird," murmured Omoski, softly.

"Come, none of yer poultry, now, Moscow!" whispered Killb'ar. "Thunder! we're seen!"

Crack! whiz! whiz! whiz! went a shower of arrows from the edge of the hollow.

Soon, however, the hunter discovered that he had made a mistake. The arrows were not discharged at the three, but at a male prisoner, who had just escaped from his dusky captors, and was speeding along toward the woods. This person Killb'ar recognized by his gray blanket as the same captive previously seen passing the tree in which were concealed the hunter and his fair companion.

The eyes of the Indians being fixed upon the fugitive, who fled in the direction at right angles with our friends, the red-men did not notice the hunter or his two companions, who now were in deep shadow.

The latter, crouching in shrubbery, waited until the noises of the pursuit had passed away, before they ventured to proceed. They had not gone far, when several Indians being discovered in the distance, showed that the savages had not yet given up the idea of finding Killb'ar, as the dusky guard were evidently watching for him.

The three, therefore, carefully made a wide detour, so as to get round the Indians unobserved.

Meanwhile the fugitive mentioned was speeding on with all his strength. He was a tall, well-made fellow, clad in tattered trowsers and jacket, besides the blanket he wore, and which he had thrown over his shoulders so as to give freer play to his limbs. His face, however, was singular-looking, containing here and there, a black patch, which gave it a hideous, semi-savage appearance. That the man had broken the thongs with which his wrists were tied, was plain from the fragments dangling therefrom; that he had succeeded in doing so was not remarkable, with such tremendous breadth of shoulders and breast as he exhibited.

On he went, taking great leaps as he proceeded, until he came unexpectedly to the edge of a gully, into which he stumbled, rolling down the side like a ball.

He was about rising to rush up the other side and keep on, when suddenly, a hand caught him by the shoulder.

"Come in hyar, yer poor mortul! But don't yer try to make luvu ter me, fur I won't stand any sich nonsense, my affeckshuns bein' pre-engaged to Crockery!"

Almost by main strength, Suke Spoon, for it was none other than she, hauled the fugitive into a large earth-cave, concealed by long bunches of drooping grass. Over this a rivulet trickling from above, washed away all traces of any person venturing near this retreat.

A moment after entering the hollow, the fugitive could hear the Indians as they passed the cave, evidently at a loss to determine what had become of the runaway.

Having waited until she thought the savages had quit the gully, Suke Spoon, with a half-subdued ahem, recommenced the conversation.

"So you got away, too! I'm pesky glad of

it; I gived the rascals a run of it which I think will make 'em remember Suke Spoon to their dyin' day. I jist runned until I war tired, when down I rolled in this 'ere gully, to find a snug little holler hyar, all ready fur me. I hev been hyar some hours, and war a-thinkin' of leavin' when I heerd you roll into the gully, and jist peerin' through the grass, I parceived by yer white and black face that yer war my feller-pris'ner. How did yer escape?"

"The Indians were a few yards off, with their backs turned to me, when, having already weakened my bonds, by sawing them across a stone, I broke them and made off!"

"Well, I do wish I war safe at the settlement, as it's thar I'm in hopes o' findin' the person I'm arter."

As she spoke, Suke's eyes gleamed fire, and she shook the gridiron, to which she had held on through her troubles, most menacingly.

"Begging your pardon, madam, I should not like to be that person!"

"Hoo! hoo! No love-makin', I tell yer!"

"I had no such intention, upon my word!"

"Well! well! Thar seemed to be admiration in yer eyes, at any rate. Jist keep yer sheep's glances to yerself, young hoss!"

The stranger bowed acquiescence, and at once turned his eyes away.

Suke, with her gridiron held on high, her huge bonnet pushed back from her red and masculine face, certainly was not a very attractive object.

An hour had passed, when a step was heard near the hollow.

The stranger, notwithstanding his semi-savage face, now showed gallantry.

"Give me that implement, madam!" he said, attempting to take the gridiron. "I will defend you, as well as I can! It is evident our retreat is discovered!"

"Hands off!" whispered Suke, sternly, "and don't yer git up quite so close to me! I ain't to be flattered, I kin tell yer. As to my girdiron, that 'are shall not quit Suke Spoon's grip, while thar's an enemy around!"

Nearer came the step.

"It is a female's," remarked the stranger.

Both listening intently, heard the step draw nearer. Finally, with her back to the cave, her soft, sad face turned upward, Minniho, the belle of the Cherokees, seated herself upon the bank.

"Omoski! Omoski!" she moaned, and every time she uttered that name, she would rock herself to and fro.

The stranger, much impressed by her evident distress, ventured forth.

"Ha! who this?" she inquired, starting up.

The other having glanced carelessly round the moonlighted shrubbery, to assure himself that no Indians were near, answered in a low voice:

"It matters not, my poor girl! But what ails you?"

"Omoski gone! Leave Minniho, while asleep, and much hurt," laying her hand on her wounded side. "Wake up, see moonlight and hear birds sing very glad! Minniho not glad! oh no! Omoski! Omoski!"

"He was your lover?"

"Me love much. He love, until white bird come and sing to him!"

"The white bird?"

"Yes, white-face girl! Me look all round for Omoski, but not find! Follow white bird all time!"

She shook her head sadly: then, as if not caring to be questioned further, rose and moved off.

"She are sart'inly a silly little goose!" remarked Suke Spoon. "Why don't she jist tar and feather the muskrat, as she called him? Don't yer think this 'ere a roost (ruse) to find out whar we are?"

"I did not think of that; her grief seemed so real!"

"I, fer one, will quit this place," cried the female hoosier.

And shouldering her knapsack, with the pot and gridiron attached, she left the hollow.

"Are yer comin' with me, white-and-black?"

"In all gallantry I am bound to do so, madam!"

"Why, yer pesky impudence! Jist never mind yer gallantry! I'm an unprotected female, but virtue are all powerful!"

So saying she pulled the gridiron from the knapsack, and shook it fiercely at the other.

He bowed and said:

"I will not go with you, certainly, if you do not wish it."

"Thar is impudence!" cried Suke Spoon— "wish it! Hoo! hoo! hoo! Ef it wasn't fer

disturbin' the Injuns, I'd pull your h'ar fer that!"

So saying she disappeared into the deep shadows of the gully, leaving the other to his own meditations.

"It will be impossible for me to reach the settlement," he thought; "the passes are all guarded. What then?"

Glancing up, he beheld what he had been watching at intervals for several minutes; a red glare upon the sky over the top of the woods in the distance. This could not be from an Indian camp-fire—the reflection being too broad and brilliant.

The red-man uses more caution in war-time. "I have it," ejaculated the watcher; "that fire must come from some of General Jackson's cavalry, encamped in the woods. The settlement will be attacked at daylight. Ah! if I can only reach the troops in time to bring them to assist those in the little garrison!"

The speaker was worn and weary with the hardships he had undergone. Nevertheless he nerved himself for his task.

"Now, then: I WILL bring the troops or die in the attempt!"

So saying, he dove into the shrubbery, and hurried swiftly and cautiously away toward the distant light. Soon his pace slackened; a wound, received in the hip when he was first captured by the Indians, now gave him considerable trouble. He could hardly drag himself along. Finally, down he went upon one knee. With resolute effort he rose and staggered on—then down again!

Thus, alternately rising and falling, this man urged his way determinedly, through the dark woods!

CHAPTER XI.

THE GARRISON STRUGGLE.

"Hist!" muttered Killb'ar, "thar be skunks right ahead!"

As he spoke an arrow whizzed past his temple, followed by four Indians, who rushed upon the little party with tomahawks uplifted.

"It may be all up with us!" exclaimed the hunter, "and then ag'in it may not!"

So saying, he pointed his rifle at the foremost Indian, waiting, however, the result of Omoski's interference, for the Indian had risen and confronted the others, his eagle eye flashing on them through the darkness. They were, however, of the Cree tribe, and Ergo unfortunately was among them, having joined them after the ineffectual attempt upon Omoski's life. This fellow, recognizing the young chief, at once flung his tomahawk at his head.

The weapon just missed the young warrior, who, dodging it, threw himself upon the Cree. While the two were struggling, Killb'ar was not idle.

Crash! went his piece, and one of the Indians springing straight up in the air, with a hollow groan, fell upon his back, shot through the heart.

Placing himself in front of Lucy, the hunter clubbed his rifle and stood ready to fight to the last.

"Yer infarnal skunks! Kin yer have the heart to attack two unfortunates like this 'ere girl and me, which has had sich a hard time of it? Thar's no use in preachin' to sich on-christ'in rascals!"

The Indians, of course, were not at all affected by this appeal to their benevolence.

The three rushed upon Killb'ar, who, however, nimbly leaping to one side, drawing the girl after him, with his other hand dexterously wheeling his rifle round his head in a circle, brought the stock down upon the head of one of the natives with a force which knocked him senseless to the earth.

The other two now sprung with savage grunts upon the white man.

One caught him by the throat, and while he was engaged in a desperate struggle with this fellow, the other, drawing his knife, would have driven it between his shoulders if a rifle, fired at this instant from an unexpected source, had not stretched the red-man lifeless upon the ground with a bullet through his brain!

At the same moment Omoski, having driven his knife to the heart of the Cree, rose to his feet.

Killb'ar, by a peculiar movement, had sent the native with whom he was contending, head-foremost across his hip, when from the shrubbery burst forth Lucy's uncle, with others of the party who had set out from the settlement.

"This meetin'," said Killb'ar, as he shook hands with Lucy's uncle, "are sart'inly unexpected. It puts me in mind of when I war out

buffeler-huntin' on the plains. I war surrounded by Injuns, when, gettin' desprit, I jist concluded to holler. I raised my voice cl'ar up to the sky, and hollered like a brass cannon. I war heard thirty miles off, and war rescued by twenty hoosiers, which comed that distance to my assistance!"

Meanwhile, before he could be captured, the Indian, thrown by Killb'ar, had risen to his feet, and was now speeding away like the wind.

"We had better make for the settlement at once," suggested Lucy's uncle. "We will fight our way thither, if necessary."

Cautiously but swiftly proceeding, the party, meeting with no further resistance, arrived in the settlement a little after midnight, and at once informed the little garrison in charge of the block-house, of the meditated attack.

As soon as possible, every available man was in the block-house, armed with such weapons as he could procure, while women and children were all huddled together behind those who were to do the fighting.

Meanwhile, many glances were turned toward Omoski, who stood apart from the others, watching with indifference the preparations for the combat.

"Whom have we here?" inquired Captain Bloomfield, of the garrison.

"An Injun friend of mine, Cap," remarked Killb'ar.

"Is he going to help us?"

"Omoski not help white man fight," answered the young warrior, with quiet dignity.

"Why are you here, then?"

"Omoski has his reasons," was the reply.

"He are in love!" exclaimed Killb'ar, bluntly.

"It are perfectly astonishin', the effects of love on them as has tender hearts. When I war more youthful, I tramped it a hundred and fifty miles, jist ter see a little half-breed critter, ter which I had taken a fancy, drink a gallon of whisky, on a wager with a big Indiana hoosier! Let me see, Moscow, it are too late, now, fer yer to find the Red B'ar and get his scalp!"

"Yes; Omoski soon go back to die!"

A whispered consultation now was held among the settlers, when it was resolved to arrest the young Indian and keep guard over him, that he might do no harm. Killb'ar resisted the measure, but was overruled by the others.

Just at break of day, the sentry of the garrison discovered, by the swaying of the bushes several hundred yards in front of the building, the approach of the enemy, and gave the alarm. The men in the garrison, numbering about sixty stalwart fellows, were instantly stationed at the loopholes, with their weapons ready.

"Hyar they come!" cried Killb'ar, as the savages, numbering at least two hundred, and composed of Crees and Cherokees, sprung up, yelling like demons, and rushed toward the gate of the garrison. Above this gate, to a jutting beam of wood, sprung Killb'ar, half a dozen of the men following him, after obtaining consent of Captain Bloomfield.

On came the savages, until within fifty yards of the block-house, when the word fire was given. There was a crash, and twenty red-men tumbled to the ground.

Over the fallen ones, however, rushed the others, making straight for the gate.

"Now, then!" exclaimed Killb'ar, "we are at the post of honor, and let us see what we kin do with them skunks. Ef yer take good aim," continued the hunter, heedless of the showers of arrows and bullets whistling around him and his little band, "we kin each drop our man."

The rifles were lifted and discharged with good effect. Half a dozen of the foremost Indians tumbled to earth. One gigantic savage had succeeded in reaching the gate, with a small battering-ram, evidently made from a part of the tree chopped down in the woods, and commenced pounding away at it with great force, while his comrades hurried to assist him.

They paused, however, as another volley was poured from the garrison.

At the same moment Killb'ar sprung from the top of the gate to the earth, a distance of fifteen feet, and closed with the savage battering at the gate.

"You infarnal skunk, yer days are numbered!" he exclaimed, as, dodging a blow from the tomahawk, he drove his knife to the hilt in the red-man's breast.

Killb'ar's situation now was perilous in the extreme. There seemed no way for him to clamber back. With the exception of a spike in the gate, about ten feet above the ground, the wood-work was perfectly smooth.

"Keep yer places thar!" exclaimed the hunter, coolly, to some men who were about jumping

down to his assistance from above. "Yer'll all be needed thar whar you are, before long. Yer kin believe that!"

So saying, not seeming to mind bullets or arrows any more than if they were so many peas, Killb'ar drove his knife firmly into the wood-work about the hight of his knee. Then, with a nimble spring, he placed his right foot upon it, thus being enabled to reach with his hand the spike above his head. Grasping this firmly, he drew himself near enough to the top of the gate to be drawn up by several men, who caught him under the shoulder.

"A narrow escape!" cried several.

"Not a circumstance to a narrerer which I met with once t'other side of the mount'ins. I war thar fightin' with an Injun, when another got behind me, and war about to plunge his knife in my buddy, when, my steam bein' up to the b'ilin' p'int, my own knife jist jumped out of my belt and walked right into the stomach of t'other skunk! That war the last of him, arter which I licked the other Injun so bad that he run away as if his Man-toe war arter him!"

By this time Captain Bloomfield had succeeded in getting a couple of old nine-pounders, well loaded with slugs, to the top of the inclosure, seeing which, the savages came to a sudden halt.

Bloomfield was about giving orders to fire, when an object which did not fail of arousing much interest and excitement, suddenly came upon the scene. It was none other than SUKE SPOON!

Yes, she had been recaptured by the Indians, and was now to be used as a go-between, to prevent the white men's firing on their enemies.

Notwithstanding the peril of her situation, there was no sign of fear in the face of dauntless Suke! There she stood, gazing half-deftly toward the garrison, her bonnet thrown back, her gray, catlike eyes flashing lightning, her long gown rustling in the wind.

"See hyar!" she shrieked, "you in the garrison! Fire away! This are a female hoosier, which aren't afraid of gunpowder, nor nothing else. Never mind ef yer bullets do riddle me; I'm—"

She suddenly paused, catching a glimpse of the familiar form of Killb'ar upon the top of the gate.

Previously cool and self-possessed, this man now showed signs of trepidation, and half-turned as if to rush back into the garrison.

"Hoo! hoo! hoo! Thar ye are, the one I've seeked so long. You've trifled with my affeck-shuns, built upon the halter of this buzzum! How kin yer hev the face to stand thar right before me arter all that?"

As she spoke, she rushed toward the gate, but was caught and forc'd back by the Indians before she had taken ten steps.

"Thar, thar! I'm a pars'cuted feminine, sartinly! Oh! what kin equivalent tho' female heart when torn by divarsity and falsehood! I'll hev satisfaction! I must hev satisfaction! I'll pull his ha'r all out of his head!"

She, with a powerful effort, broke from those who held her, and flourished her gridiron. Soon, however, she was agai: seized.

Captain Bloomfield was troubled and perplexed. The Indians now began pouring showers of arrows and discharges of riflery upon the block-house.

So well aimed were the missiles, that three of his best men were badly wounded, and one man killed outright, an arrow having passed through the loop-hole by which he was stationed and penetrated his eye, passing into his brain.

With a wild scream he fell dead upon his back, his glazed eyes turned upward, his form quivering in the agonies of death. It was a sad sight to see the mother and sister of the dying man rush to his side and gaze upon his writhing features. They knelt by him, wound their arms round him, showering kisses upon his pale lips, his forehead and his eyelids, and wildly calling upon his name, as if they thought that could retain the fading spark of life a few moments longer.

The poor fellow breathed but three words before he lay cold before the loving twain. Even then, his mother, with her gray hair streaming all round his face, wildly called upon his name. It seemed as if she could not realize that he was really dead—lost to her forever!

The poor fellow, a fine healthy young man when he entered the block-house, had, a few days previously, proposed to a young girl, who had promised to become his wife in a week. This girl was in the rear of the block-house, where several of her sex were gathered, tending the wounded, when the sad news of her lover's fate was brought to her.

She was a tall, queenly lass, whose upright carriage and flashing black eyes betokened a high spirit, which was evinced the moment she received the dreaded tidings. Up she sprung, her whole frame quivering with excitement, her cheeks flushed, her nostrils dilating, her eyes gleaming fire!

"Dead! dead!" she shrieked; "ah, no! surely you do not mean this! Oh, my God! if it be true—if it be true, the red-men shall pay dearly for the deed!"

So saying, she clinched her white teeth, and with a few bounds cleared the space between the rear of the block-house and her lover's body.

Over that dead form she kneeled, bestowed several kisses upon the cold lips, then, grasping the rifle her lover had dropped, proceeded to load it.

"I will pay the red-men for this!" she cried, in a low, hoarse voice—"yes, I will pay them for it!"

Having loaded the piece, she took careful aim, and firing, sent an Indian sprawling dead upon his face.

She was about loading again, when Captain Bloomfield, with several men, led her away.

Unfortunately the cunning Indians had now formed in double file, so that no shot could be fired from the garrison without a chance of hitting Suke Spoon. Yelling, exulting at the cessation of the settlers' fire, the red-men came on, still keeping the foul female prisoner in advance, rushing toward the gate.

Meanwhile, not a settler dared to discharge his piece, from fear of his bullet's striking Suke.

In this dilemma, Killb'ar suddenly recovered his usual coolness. Having reloaded his rifle, he commenced firing in such a dexterous manner as to hit the Indians over the head of Suke.

"Oh! Crockery, yer deceiver!" screamed the excited female, shaking her gridiron at the hunter; "suppose one of yer shots should t'ar this lacerated speerit! Hoo! hoo! Ef I once git my bands on yer, I'll make every ha'r stick straight up!"

The sweat came out on the hunter's brow. It was plain that he was not indifferent to Suke's remarks.

"She are sart'iuly a Tartar," he remarked; "thar are somethin' about her which to me are terrific and perkooliarly mortifyin'. Her voice are not the sweetest, bein' somethin' like an owl's, while her eyes are like soap-bubbles. I always war afraid of sich when in the heads of the female sect, and I don't like to git in front of 'em, when it's possible to help it."

"Oh, ef I git hold of yer, I'll make yer squarn. Thar'll be no cure for the baldness which I shall leave upon yer head. To think that I tramped it all the way from t'other side of the mountains to see yer, goin' through sich dangers as mought have appalled any delikit female of my natur', and yet that yer don't appreciate me in the least! Thar's no hope for lovely women in this mundun sphere, and it's fer my wrongs that I intend to conflict chastisement upon yer!"

"What have you done to this woman?" inquired one of the men, turning to the guide.

"Nuthing except what any honest fellow inought have done. I hev a wife of my own, you see, but durin' my huntin' and trappin' excursions, before I married the one I speak of, I met Suke Spoon one mornin' a-hocin' pertaties in her garden. As she looked up, I bid her good-day, and jist asked fur a drink of water, which she gived me. Arter that I sat down, and she began a-chattin' to me. Then her dad come out and began a-chattin', too. He talked a long time, then invited me in, which I didn't refuse.

"That was the way our acquaintance commenced. Suke's dad invited me to call often, and I promised I would. Arter that, on one occasion, I saved the life of Suke from an Injun, which war about to take her ha'r. The Injun had his tomahawk up to strike her, when I jist druv my fist down his throat, and at the same time gave him a powerful knock with the other fist, which war a settler. He lay still a minnit until jist as I war a-pullin' out my knife, when he jumped up and scampered off, makin' big licks. From that moment Suke seemed to think I was serious in my intentions upon her, and thar, you see, war the cause of the many persecutions to which I hev been subject, since I married another."

As Killb'ar spoke he lifted his rifle and took good aim at a tall savage who had laid his hand on Suke's shoulder, probably with the intention of silencing her tongue, which was still sending volley after volley at the hunter.

The report of the hunter's piece now rung out sharply upon the air, but the Indian had seen the weapon as it was pointed at him, and, dodging just as the guide pulled the trigger, he avoided the bullet, which, however, struck his scalp-lock, carrying it clean from his head as if it had been shaved off.

"Ugh!" grunted Omoski, who, from the interior of the block-house, was a spectator of this shot, "white man good fire; never saw fire before like that!"

"If it had been his head that went off, it would have been better—eh, Injun?" remarked one of the settlers.

Omoski's eyes flashed fire, but he said not a word. It was evident, however, that had his hands been free, he would have brained the speaker.

"I never war afraid of mortal man, exceptin' Su'ke, that she-devil thar!" muttered Killb'ar, as he aimed his rifle for another shot.

Ban! went the piece, and with a scream that pierced all ears, ringing clearly above the yells of the savages, down went Suke Spoon, her hand upon her heart!

"You've done it now!" said one of the settlers. "She's a gone case! I knowed you couldn't keep up such firing as that long without hitting her."

Killb'ar, however, coolly firing another shot, seemed perfectly indifferent as to the catastrophe which had happened. The only remark he was heard to make was this:

"Well, Suke had her good parts, although she war different from most wimmen in respects!"

Over the body of the fallen one sprung the natives, making a simultaneous dash toward the block-house.

Captain Bloomfield now ordered the gunners to discharge the two pieces of artillery. All were confident that these would at least hold the savages in check, if they did not scatter them. The gunners applied their torches at the command to fire. There was a hissing sound; a cloud of smoke rose from the vent-holes, but the pieces would not go off! The powder was damaged!

The screams of the savages grew louder. A large body of them, rushing at the gate, now forced it open, in spite of all efforts to dislodge them.

The women in the garrison screamed. Their defenders plied their muskets vigorously, but it was evident that the savages pouring through the gate, would soon be upon them, and make all victims to a merciless slaughter.

Foremost among those who defended the block-house was Killb'ar.

One moment firing, the next using his knife to great advantage, the hunter, beardless alike of bullets, arrows, and tomahawks, conducted himself in a manner which, in spite of their great peril, excited the wonder and admiration of all present.

At one time the brave fellow found himself attacked at once by four Indians. He retreated a couple of paces, and as the foremost two of his adversaries made a dash at him, he threw out a leg, tripping one over, while, with his clubbed rifle, he laid another dead at his feet. To run his knife through the throat of the other, as he was rising, was the work of a moment, after which he again wielded his piece, knocking senseless another savage.

Now the others pressed him close. One hurled his tomahawk, which, however, the hunter dodged with marvelous celerity, and then, dashing suddenly forward, drove the stock of his rifle against the stomach of the fellow, thus knocking him down upon his back.

Meanwhile, one of the savages had come up behind him, and in a second it would have been all over with him, but for the stout-hearted settler girl who had lost her lover, and who now, taking good aim, sent a bullet through the brain of the Indian.

Now Killb'ar, dashing at the other, grasped him by the throat, and down went the two, rolling over and over in a desperate struggle.

The Indian was a stalwart fellow, greatly exceeding his adversary in size, but the guide made up for this by superior agility and skill. Trained to Indian fighting, he knew every wile and stratagem connected with this sort of combat, and was not slow to take advantage of it.

By this time the two were a little apart from the others, so that the hunter had the red-man all to himself. He waited until the Indian had partially succeeded in getting clear of his (Killb'ar's) clutch, when, having purposely permitted this, he raised his knee almost to his chin and dealt the savage a kick in the breast, which sent him rolling over and over, bewildered and al-

most senseless. To spring to his feet was then, with the guide, the work of a single instant. The next he was upon the prostrate man with his knife buried to the hilt in the fellow's bosom!

A moment after he was among the settlers, fighting with might and main.

"Well done! well done!" sounded on all sides, as the brave fighter, placing himself at the head of a party of the stoutest settlers, dashed at the Indians with an impetuosity which caused them to retreat backward.

Soon, however, the little band of whites was forced back, and with yells of exultation the Indians, like a dark mass of fiends, were about pouring into the block-house, when a crash as of thunder was heard without. The air was filled with flying bullets, the tramp of horses' hoofs, the clanging of sabers, the shouts of officers and cheers of men were heard.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Killb'ar, springing over the body of a savage whom he had dashed down with the butt of his rifle, "if it ain't Jackson's cavalry!"

CHAPTER XII.

A TRIPLE REUNION.

He was right. The wounded messenger had with much difficulty contrived to reach the cavalry camp in the woods and bring troops to the assistance of the settlers at a very critical moment.

Dashing upon the savages, the long line, full three hundred in number, soon sent the Indians scampering off in all directions.

As they retreated, such of the cavalrymen as were not pursuing sprung from their horses and were shaking hands with those whom they had so opportunely rescued.

"Well done, lads!" exclaimed Captain Bloomfield; "a thousand thanks to you and your gallant commander."

No sooner had the Indians quitted the field than the gigantic form of Suke Spoon was suddenly seen to rise up and confront one or two astonished cavalrymen, who were in the rear. She rose, and folding her arms over her chest, stood quietly surveying the astonished horsemen, one of whom at once reined in his steed.

"I could have sworn I saw you lying on the field when we first made our charge upon the Indians!" exclaimed the man.

"So you did—so I war; but I've risen like Lazerum, to take revenge on Crockery, the deceiver, the introducer of woman's kind affeck-shuns!"

"Hot hol hc! My dear girl, what are you talking about?"

"Don't dear me, yer lynx-eyed young boss! I ain't to be deareed by your sect with importunity! So jist git out of the way! I warn't dead; jist pretendin', that's all, so that the sogs'rs might fire!"

So saying, she ran across the field into the block house.

"Hyar yer are! Oh hoo! hoo! yer deceiver! I'll thump yer head! I'll t'ar yer ha'r out by the roots! I'll teach yer ter play upon the feelin's of a virtuous female!"

With hair and bonnet flying—with gridiron flourished high in one hand, her other tightly clinched, SUKE SPOON, tall, gaunt, and in as good a state of health as ever, now came rushing through soldiers, settlers and women, toward Killb'ar who, begrimed with smoke and powder, stood leaning upon his long rifle, grinning.

At sight of Suke, the hunter showed no astonishment, although he did evince considerable trepidation. He turned as if to flee, but perceiving it was too late, seemed determined to make the best of his situation.

"How yer do, Suke Spoon?" he said, calmly, extending his hand; "I knew my bullet didn't hit you; I knew yer fallin' down war all a trick! You're a noble gal, Suke, so far as fortitude, heroics and sich is consarned!"

She looked at him fiercely, as if she thought he was merely flattering in order to turn her wrath from his devoted head.

"None of that pesky nonsense, Crockery!" she exclaimed; "thar war a time when I mought have listened to sich honeyed words with palteratin' buzzum, but that time are now gone past and I doubt ef it may ever return. The love which I once felt fer yer can only be restored by yer makin' the sacrific which it are yer dooty to make, considerin' how yer encouraged me ter believe that yer intentions war serious!"

"I never encouraged yer! Thar never war a time, I kin remember, that I said a word to make yer think that I meant to hev the knot tied."

"Crockery! oh, Crockery! ef the 'arth war to open and swaller yer, this mint, I don't think it would be any more than you mought have reason to expect after tellin' sich lies as them! Thar war one time, I kin remember it well—when the stars were a-shinin' in heaven, and the frogs war a-singin' thar sweet hymns in the swamp, that yer come to me and told me that my ha'r war brighter than glistening waters, and my eyes lovelier than pebbles, half-buried in the sand."

"That war nothin'; I said that merely out of compliment, and not that I meant anything sweet by the same!"

"And I by yer side! Oh, yer varmint! What kin equal the culpable natur' of sich men as are arter the destroyin' of woman's most precious jewel—the modesty which prevents her declarin' the love which are a-burnin' in her heart, like hot pokers a-turnin' holes in wood!"

"Now then, Suke, I beg that yer remain calm. Yer kin, if yer choose, and I hope you will choose. Thar are sartin pekooliarities of yer sex which are charmin' to behold, and modesty are one of these; modesty I hev always found in you, Suke Spoon, more than in enny others of yer sect! That is a kind of shrinkin' modesty, which are very, very precious, and which you sartinly hev to perfeckshun, along with yer good looks!"

The compliment had no softening effect.

Suke came on, caught the hunter by the hair of the head, and commenced dealing him a succession of tremendous thwacks upon the back with her gridiron.

"Thar! thar! thar! Oh, yer may squarm; yer may twist; I'm bound to hev satisfaction, ef thar's law in the land! You war a perfect rascal to trifle with a promisin' young gal like me as would make any man a good wife! Take that, and that, and that THAR! I'll get breeches of promise ef thar's law in the land!"

Still belabored, the hunter finally made a powerful effort, and breaking away, soon disappeared from the block-house.

Suke came rushing out, to just catch a glimpse of him as he vanished in the wood.

She ran, hoping to overtake him, her bonnet strings and hair flying in the wind.

Meanwhile, Killb'ar, turning, caught sight of her coming after him, and redoubled his speed. He bounded ahead, with the swiftness of a roe, and had soon disappeared from the vision of Suke Spoon in the deep shadows of the woods. Still, however, she followed, until, her dress catching against a twig, she was thrown flat upon the ground.

"This are sartinly an ad'itional to my woes!" she exclaimed, seating herself, and rocking to and fro; "I hev foll'ed that pesky deceiver, it seems, jist to git into a situation which are both pekooliar and mortifyin'!"

In fact her dress was badly torn, disclosing ankles and feet of a size which were *more* than a match for her other stupendous proportions.

While she was still giving vent to her grief and anxiety, there was a step behind her, and, turning, she beheld Minniho, the beautiful Indian girl, who stood, as if about to beat a retreat.

"Hello! Injun gal!" exclaimed Suke, springing to her feet, "what hev brought you hyar again? Ain't yer found that lover of yours yet, and a-given him a good pummelin'?"

"No find," answered Minniho, sadly. "Ah! 'fraid no find more—'fraid been kill by white man!"

"That's whar yer are mistaken. What kind of a lookin' chap war yer lover, and what war his name?"

"Omoski! Eye like eagle, form like mountain pine. No Injun like him!" she added, proudly.

"He are all right!" cried Suke; "I see'd him inside the block-house, safe and unharmed. He war a pris'ner until the fight was over, when he war set free!"

"Oh, Minniho very glad!"

"Ef you take my advice, you will pummel him fer runnin' arter some other gal, especially one that are not his own color. I saw him a-castin' sheep's eyes at me, but he soon found out that it war no use, as I didn't give him the slightest encouragement, which sartinly grieved him mighty bad!"

Minniho, eying the speaker keenly, seemed to understand her character at once.

She merely shrugged her shoulders with a mixture of quiet pity and contempt.

"Like to see Omoski again! No lay hand on Omoski! Omoski no squaw; he fight with brave warrior, and Minniho look up to him as she look up to pine on mountain rock."

"Ef you look up to him that way, you are a pesky fool! You'll get no thanks for it—nothin' but broken bones in the end, which are the way of the male sect to them as give 'em encouragement."

"Omoski's voice is sweet to Minniho!" answered the girl; "his voice falls upon her spirit like the thunder rumbling with the sweet bells on the white man's church! If he loved her she would be content!"

With these words she turned and quitted Suke, who gazed after her with an expression of comical pity.

"Thar goes one of them poor deluded heathens, who are always a-talkin' thar poultry about sich luv as kin never grow upon this 'arth enny more than radishes and turnips kin grow in red clay! Oh! when will the female sect be resuscitated from sich thralderum as torments thar buzzums!"

Meanwhile Omoski, now free, stood, heedless of the hubbub of voices around him, watching with admiration the pale, beautiful countenance of Lucy Ward, seated upon a bench by the side of her uncle, who was talking to several of his friends.

Suddenly through the crowd of settlers and soldiers a fine-looking young man—none other than the messenger who had brought the troops thither, but with the black patches now washed from his face—made his appearance in front of Lucy.

The latter gave one wild cry of joy, then sprung up, and fell almost fainting into the arms of the young man, crying:

"Mark! Mark! it is he! Thank God! Thank God! Not dead after all!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE YOUNG BRAVE'S HEART FIGHT.

In a few words the young man explained.

He had set out on his journey at a good pace to bring the minister who was to marry him to Lucy. He had not proceeded more than fifteen miles, however, when he came upon certain signs, showing that Indians had recently passed that way. The signs, though minute, such as the displacing, here and there, of a twig by the movement of the body, and the faint impression of moccasins upon the grass, were sufficiently plain to the practiced eye of Mark Winters.

On discovering the signs, he hesitated a few moments, thinking whether he had better advance or retreat.

Finally he concluded that he would go back to procure arms with which to defend himself in case of attack. Accordingly, turning his horse's head, he was about retracing his way, when suddenly he caught sight of the keen eyes, glittering like fire-flies, of a couple of savages, otherwise screened from his sight, gleaming from a clump of shrubbery upon his right.

To betray his knowledge of their vicinity would, he knew, seal his fate at once. He multered all his resolution to keep a calm face, giving no sign of the discovery he had made, meanwhile permitting his horse to keep on at its usual pace. Then carelessly thrusting his hand in his left pocket, he caught at the handle and opened the blade of a large jack-knife he carried, and which, in the event of his coming to close quarters, might help him defend himself.

On went the horse, and soon passed the very clump of shrubbery in which the Indians were concealed. Now was a critical moment.

Mark's whole body was covered with perspiration as he passed that bush, expecting every moment to feel the deadly tomahawk cleave his skull.

This did not happen. He kept on, and having passed the bush, believed that he could now escape. Accordingly, he suddenly urged his horse forward at a tremendous pace, turning, as he did so, to see a couple of rifles protruding from the bush!

Bang! went one of them, and down went his horse, stumbling upon its forelegs, while a stream of blood gushed down the side of its head, which had been perforated by a bullet. Mark sprung from the saddle just in time to save himself from being crushed to death, and took to his heels, when, his foot catching in some vines trailing along the ground, down he stumbled, flat upon his face. Before he could regain his feet the Indians were upon him. One raised his tomahawk, which he seemed on the point of using, when the other grasped his arm.

They concluded to make him prisoner; his arms were secured with thongs of deer-hide, and he was led off to a tree, to which the Indians secured him, while with their tomahawks they proceeded to scoop, in a small, natural hollow, a place large enough for the reception

of the dead horse, which it was evident they did not wish to remain unburied, and thus afford a clue to the prisoner's fate. The hollow was soon dug, the horse was, with much difficulty, rolled in and buried, with leaves and twigs so artfully arranged as to resemble a natural clump of shrubbery and conceal the animal. Afterward Mark was conducted to the Indian camp, in which he found a negro, voluntarily a slave, who had long before disappeared in an unaccountable manner, from the settlement in which Mark was born.

The slave, recognizing him, resolved to help him to escape. He came to the lodge at night, bringing him a piece of burnt wood to blacken his face, and an old blanket, such as was worn by the negro himself. Thus disguised, Mark, on a dark night, contrived to get past the Indian guard, who mistook him for the negro. On the previous day, the young man had made the negro in return for his kindness a present of his ring, which had been much admired by the black.

"Well," continued the narrator, "I did think I should escape, but I had not proceeded many miles when I was recaptured by the Indians, who then informed me that they had forced the negro to own that he had connived at my escape, and had then BURNED HIM ALIVE IN A HOLLOW TREE!"

At this glances of intelligence were exchanged between Lucy and her uncle.

"It is plain now," exclaimed Mr. Ward, "how the mistake regarding that body found in the hollow tree, was made!"

"Yes," replied Lucy, "and oh! thank God! that it was not Mark, after all!"

"We, indeed, have reason to be thankful!" answered her uncle.

"I certainly have," replied Mark, "although I feel very sorry for that poor negro who befriended me! The Indians told me that he made frantic endeavors to escape them. One time he clambered far up into the branches of a lofty tree and there lay upon his belly, thinking that his pursuers did not see him. The Indians agreed, however, for the sake of torturing their intended victim, as the cat tortures the mouse, to pretend that they did not see him. Therefore they all sat down under the tree, and commenced to talk on various subjects, secretly enjoying the agony and suspense of the poor fellow above them. They remained thus for several hours, when they rose and moved away as if to proceed. This, however, was only a feint; they went out of sight of the watcher and screened themselves among some thick bushes, whence they could, unobserved by the object of their regards, watch his every movement. Soon they saw him descend from the tree, peer cautiously around and then set out upon a run. The deception had now been carried far enough. With a wild whoop, they started after him, and were soon close upon him. Then they slackened their pace that he might gain further headway, allowing him finally to vanish almost from their sight. At this point, they increased their speed, and in a short time were near enough to see him crawl into the hollow tree. They now lengthened out the poor fellow's sufferings by resting themselves and quietly watching this tree. Wondering that its occupant did not emerge therefrom, they proceeded to the hollow trunk, when they found the negro so closely jammed that he could not extricate himself!

"At this they set up an exultant shout, then proceeded to heap dry fagots round the tree and light them. The rest is well known to you."

The young man had finished his narrative when Suke Spoon elbowed her way to the side of Lucy Ward.

"See hyar, young gall!" she exclaimed, "yer won't be jealous 'ef I tell yer that I hev good reason to believe that this young man, while with me in the woods, would hev proposed to me 'ef I had encouraged him! I could see it in his eye, but thanks to my devotion, which are very powerful. I war love-proof! I tell you this, because I like to show up the male sect, and save affekshuns from bein' trifled with as mine war!"

So saying, she turned away, leaving Lucy perplexed, and Mark somewhat indignant. The young man, however, soon succeeded in convincing the girl of his truth. Blushing and smiling, with joy in her soft eyes, Lucy was now a changed girl.

"We will be very happy!" cried Mark, slyly squeezing her hand.

"Ah, yes, happier than words can express!" answered the girl. "It all seems to me like a

dream; a little while ago mourning you as dead and now finding you alive and well! Even now," she added, smiling, "it almost seems to me as if I am seated by the side of a ghost!"

"Do I look so very much like a ghost, then?" inquired Mark.

And as he spoke he gave proof of his being real flesh and blood by bestowing an emphatic kiss upon Lucy's pouting lips.

"Oh, Mark!" she murmured, glancing round, however, to perceive that they were not noticed.

"Now, then, when shall we be married?" he inquired.

"As soon as you please."

"Immediately, then!"

"Oh, no! I did not mean so soon! I have not even had time to comb my hair!"

While the lovers were conversing, Omoski stood watching them askance.

The attitude of the Indian, at this juncture, would have formed an excellent study for a painter. There he stood, his head half bowed, his form drawn sideways, his face strangely immobile, while in his eyes was an almost death-like expression of despair! It was by the eye alone that Omoski showed his feelings, yet it would have required a good judge of character to detect the feeling uppermost in the mind of this Indian.

"Love! love!" he muttered to himself. "The white bird has found her mate, and they can sit, bathed in sunshine, while Omoski's spirit is as black as a cloud when there is neither sun nor moon."

"Well, Indian, what do you say?" remarked Captain Bloomfield, advancing and slapping the red-man on the back, "will you go back to your woods, or shall we keep you here in the settlement? You seem to be a friendly Indian enough, and I do not care to harm you."

Omoski started as if an adder had stung him.

"Omeski will go back to the woods!"

"Very well. I hope you will not join those rascally fellows of your tribe, who attacked the settlement!"

"The Indian's soul will never join theirs in the hunting grounds!" answered the young warrior, gloomily, and strode away.

He moved only a few paces, then sat down, still loth to leave the vicinity of the "white bird," as he had called her. He sat a long time, now and then watching the two askance, while dark thoughts mingled with his sadness.

Meanwhile Lucy and her lover seemed oblivious of his presence. They were still conversing as if there were no persons but themselves in existence.

A savage idea seemed suddenly to glide into the Indian's mind, and his hand sought the hunting-knife in his belt. He moved carelessly toward the couple, and was soon close behind them. Then he paused a moment, as if irresolute, after which he turned away, and resumed the seat he had quitted. There he sat, musing for several minutes, when he rose.

"The white bird will never again sing to the Indian. Never again speak to Omoski! Why stay? He will go to his tribe and meet his disgrace! Not in the fight—not seeking the Red Bear! It is all over with the Indian! His sun has set! The last day is done! He will never go to the hunting-grounds! Farewell!"

Thus muttered Omoski, as he turned his jealous eyes resolutely away from the block-house and moved toward the forest.

Suddenly he paused, and half turned, a fierce, light in his eyes, as if with some deadly purpose. His hand sought his rifle; he half lifted it with lowering brow, his dark glance turned toward Lucy and her lover, who were moving past the gate toward her uncle's residence.

Then he changed his mind.

"Why grieve the white bird? Her mate has come back to her! Let her be happy!"

Moving on, the Indian again felt the spell of the white girl upon him. He half turned, leaning upon his rifle, a melancholy gleam in his dark eyes.

After a few moments Lucy and her lover disappeared from his sight.

"Gone! The sun—the light—the stars are out! Omoski's heart is dark!"

He moved on a step further—paused—again turned.

"Never sing to Omoski!—no, never!"

And this time he resolutely plunged into the woods.

He had not proceeded much further, when up from the brushwood started a female form, her eyes wild—her face thin—her hair drooping all round her shoulders.

It was Minniho!

"Where goes Omoski?"

"To his tribe!" answered the Indian, gloomily.

"He will die! Go not!"

"What? Minniho think Omoski fears the tomahawk?"

The Indian was dark with anger.

"No. Omoski fears nothing! But Minniho begs him to go away off with her to some distant forest! Oh, she would then be glad. She would sing to him! She would never desert him!"

The dark eyes were turned up softly and humbly, the arms crossed meekly over the bosom, the voice full of melody.

"No!" answered the Indian; "he loves not the dark bird's song."

An expression of agonizing pain came over the girl's face.

"Try to love—try to love!" she murmured, beseechingly.

"No."

"Minniho will be very good to Omoski! She will be like a little child! She will make a happy wigwam for him! She will make him better moccasins than any other girl can make. The deer's-meat shall always be to his taste!"

"No!"

"The game shall be plenty. She will go forth with him and not let him carry the heavy deer or buffalo-meat. She will carry all his burdens."

"No."

"She will talk to him and sing to him when he is sad. She will make his rifle shine with the white powder."

"No."

Vainly the girl pleaded. Omoski, with long steady strides, walked deeper into the forest.

Minniho followed, with grief-stricken face.

CHAPTER XIV.

DAVY CROCKETT FOREVER!

In about three hours, the two suddenly came upon a party of Cherokees, seated in a clearing in the woods.

Among them was the old chief, Omoski's father, and the hunter Killb'ar, who had been captured just as he was about wheeling round to return to the settlement.

At sight of the young Indian, who evinced not the slightest emotion at seeing the white captive, Comigo sternly advanced and laid his hand on his son's shoulder.

"Seven suns have set. Where is the Red Bear's scalp?"

"Omoski has broken his word."

"Why was he not with us in the fight?"

"A white bird held his heart."

"Omoski is disgraced. He must die!" exclaimed the old man, with unfaltering voice. "Comigo's own hand must deal the death-blow!"

"It is well!" answered Omoski.

As he spoke, the tribe's prophet was seen to make his appearance.

"What says Out-way-na-ha?" inquired Comigo; "is it well to kill the young warrior, now, or wait for another sun?"

"Out-way-na-ha will go and talk to the Great Spirit," answered the prophet, as he hobbled off.

"See hyar!" exclaimed Killb'ar, "if you are a-goin' to hold one of your infernal pow-wows, jist be as quick as posseble, as I hev some curiosity to know what in thunder you intend a-doin' with me. So hurry up yer funeral!"

"Stop speak!" exclaimed Comigo, angrily to the prisoner; "if not, quick kill!"

"You kin jist go ahead as soon as you like!" returned Killb'ar; "thar's little comfort in bein' in a situation like the present, which are distractin'! One thing is sart'in, I'd sooner be burned to brimstone and merlasses than fall in with the big she elephant, Suke Spoon, which are arter me with sich powerful gumption!"

The prophet entered his rude lodge, whence the most dismal sounds were heard to proceed.

"With all due respect fer sich outrageous nonsense!" remarked Killb'ar, "the noises are something like that made by a lot o' pigs, all arter a meal! I hope that Out-o'-the-way, will come out of that are lodge, before long!"

The noises grew louder every moment. Finally they increased to the most dreadful shrieks, mingled with chants and peculiar noises, as of many guttural voices all taking together.

The faces of the Indians without were expressive of the most solemn awe and respect, as they listened. Huddled together they all stood, exchanging glances, but not venturing to speak a word. The solemnity of the scene was finally broken upon by Killb'ar, who suddenly kicked his legs impatiently.

"Ker-whoop!" he exclaimed, "them are sartainly the most *outrag'us* noises that ever greeted the ear of a Christ'in. Thar war a time once when I war upon a rock, surrounded by one thousand red-skins. Thar they war, all a-shriekin' and howlin' together arter my skin, when the thought struck me that I'd jist set up a howlin', too, and see which could howl the loudest. To do this, I stood upon my toes, and, jist puffin' myself out, raised my voice so tremendously powerful that a couple o' trees, not far off, were torn up by the roots, and the ha'r of the Injuns begun a-droppin' out o'thar heads! Well, that was a good thought o'mine, for the varmints soon begun a-scamperin' off with sich speed as were never see'd by any Injun before!"

Just as Killb'ar concluded, the prophet came rushing forth from the lodge, his eyes rolling in his head, his whole face convulsed as if by a spasm.

"Ker-whoop, yer old skunk! Now, then, out with it!"

The old man, leaning against the trunk of a tree, now poured forth a perfect volley of words in the Indian tongue, of which Killb'ar comprehended enough to know that he was advising the execution of Omoski at once.

"You bloodthirsty old varmint!" exclaimed the hunter.

Comigo, however, at once unslung his tomahawk.

"The sooner Comigo strikes the better," said Omoski, quietly.

So saying, he threw down his rifle and tomahawk, and stood awaiting his fate.

Comigo moved to one side and held a brief council with the other chiefs. Stern and unrelenting, they decided on Omoski's immediate execution.

Comigo, tomahawk in hand, advanced to deal the fatal blow.

"Before Comigo strikes, Omoski would speak for the white hunter. Spare him—let him go free! He has saved Omoski's life!"

Another council was held. It was decided that the young Indian's wish should be complied with.

"Now strike!" said the latter, facing his father. "Omoski is ready!"

Up went the tomahawk, when, with a shriek, Minniho sprung forward and caught the old chief's arm.

There was also another interposition, in the voice of Killb'ar:

"See hyar! Jist hold on a minute, will yer? I ain't got much pity for Injuns ginerally, but thar's a feller-feelin' in my buzzum for Moscow hyar, sich as I never felt before! Thunder! It's Moscow's last day for seekin' the Red B'ar, you say! Well, thar's time for him to try to redeem himself yet, ef he wants ter, seein' as I'm the very chap he's arter, the great b'ar and Injun-fighter, DAVID CROCKETT!"

The effect of this announcement may be imagined. An animated conversation took place among the old chiefs, while Omoski's eyes lighted up as he remembered, and now accounted for, the wonderful skill which his white companion had shown on several occasions.

Finally Comigo, advancing toward the prisoner, said:

"The white-face tell many lie! How know speak truth?"

"Ker-whoop! Yer old skunk! do yer presume to doubt my word? Thar war a time when my word war as good as gold, and it are yet."

The Indians exchanged glances. It was evident that they still doubted the truth of the hunter's remark.

"The white man's word may be taken," said Omoski; "he has a l'g tongue, but he speaks truth now!"

"Thank ye, Moscow! That tongue of your'n, like them of all Injuns, aren't very long of a sartainty, else you'd hev tried to talk more merlasses to the white bird—the objeck of your affeckshuns!"

At the mention of this Omoski's face was shadowed by an expression of deep grief.

"The white bird is lost! Omoski never see again! She has left his heart very dark!"

"Come, Moscow, do try and get over that foolish passion! Thar's one way to do it, which are to roll over and over at the bottom of a river fer about two hours! Once I was despitely in love with a Dutch gal, whose mother warn't at all favorable tew me. I was so all-fired in love with the gal, that when I swallowed a hot peptater once, which would hev burned me under ord'nary sarcumstances, it felt as cold as a lump of ice!"

The Indians now held a consultation, after which Comigo advanced toward the hunter.

"Why call Killb'ar? 'Fraid of own name?"

"Thar's only one thing in creation that I are afraid of, and that are Suke Spoon."

"Why call Killb'ar, then?"

"That war one reason, I knowed Suke war arter me, and so took a different name, that she mought not track me. To use a *classical* compression, I prefared travelin' corncob," (incog.)

"Why not tell Omoski, you RED BEAR?"

"Because I liked the fun o'the thing, war one reason; and then again I war every day less and less inclined to fight with poor Moscow, and wanted ter put it off, because the young Injun somehow won upon my feelin's! I couldn't b'ar the thought o'takin' his life!"

"If you Red Bear, got big scar under throat. Seminole chief once fight with you. Put knife in breast! White-faces come! Seminole run!"

"Thunder! thar's a whoppin' lie! Ef you mean the 'Copper Kettle,' I kin jist tell yer that I was the only white-face round. We got into a scrimmage, and the 'Copper Kettle' begun a bilin' over, and before I knowed it, stuck his knife in my breast. I jist knocked him over the head with this 'ere rifle, when he jumped upon his horse, and in forty minits war t'other side of the mountains."

Comigo, now stooping, pulled aside the hunter's shirt and discovered the Seminole scar!

There could no longer be a doubt upon the subject; the prisoner was the renowned Crockett!

At this, the eyes of the old chief lighted up. He would not have to take his son's life after all. Omoski had before him yet the chance of redeeming his word.

"Omoski will fight the Red Bear now?"

"Yes," answered the young Indian, the old spirit lighting his eyes. "But if Omoski falls, the Red Bear's scalp must remain untouched. No other hand than Omoski's should take it. The white hunter must be set free!"

"Well done!" exclaimed Crockett. "You're a noble Injun, and it goes mighty ag'in' me to take yer life! But, ef we must fight, why the sooner the better, as I are in a hurry to get back to the settlement!"

The prisoner's arms were unbound. The chosen weapons were hunting-knives. The Indians formed a wide circle round the two, and at a given signal, the combat commenced.

Omoski aimed his blows rapidly and skillfully, but so quick were the movements of Crockett that he avoided every thrust by nimble dodging. On s'veral occasions he might have buried his knife in the young Indian's heart, but he seemed loth to do so.

Finally the two closed.

Omoski's match for wrestling had never been found among the red-men, but he now had to deal with one who could unloosen the hug of a bear and hurl the animal to the ground.

With one downward sweep of his knife, Crockett severed the blade of Omoski's close to the handle; then seizing the Indian by the throat with one hand, and by his belt with the other, whirled him over his hip to the earth! Catching the prostrate Indian by his scalp-lock, while with both knees pressing him to the ground, the hunter held his knife suspended above him, as if to show how easily he might use it.

"Strike!" hoarsely cried the Indian. "Omoski rather die than live after this! Strike!"

"No! no!" cried Minniho. "No strike?"

Crockett thrust his knife in his belt.

"Thar, Moscow, you've satisfied yer relations, and I'm perfectly satisfied too. You did yer best, and I kin say, fought better than any Injun that I war ever engaged with. Ker-whoop! cheer up, and don't be down-hearted!"

The Indian rose as Crockett released him. Both arms being sprained by his fall, hung as if broken by his side.

He glanced at Minniho, in whose soft eyes, as well as in those of the other Indians, he read sadness and mortification at the result of the fight.

The girl evidently guessed the thoughts which were passing through his mind. She glided to his side, she laid both hands gently upon his arms, and looked up beseechingly into his face, smiling a bright, hopeful smile.

"Minniho is still proud of Omoski!" she exclaimed, softly. "She will ever be proud of him."

The Indian half turned away.

"Come, Moscow!" exclaimed Killb'ar, "don't yer fret yerself over what's happened! Ef I say it myself, I have licked two red-skins at once in a fair, stand-up fight. Let that console yer. Yer kin know one thing, which mought be a comfort, and that are that you are the

bravest of yer kind, and kin thrash any of the rest of the red-skins!"

Still, however, Omoski looked fully as gloomy as before. He turned his glance westward, as if he would penetrate the dark arches of the forest and fix his eyes upon the white girl once more.

Comigo, with all the other warriors, stood apart, their glances fixed sternly upon the young man. The red prophet, meanwhile, had begun a low, mournful chant, which rang strangely through the woods. Omoski listened several moments, then took a few steps forward.

The weight of his misfortunes, his loss of the white bird, his defeat, his absence from his brothers during their late battle with the whites, now came upon him with crushing force.

"Farewell! farewell!" he howled. "The Manitou spoke wrong! He said Omoski would win in the fight with the Red Bear!"

"No! no!" exclaimed Minniho, "it was not Manitou who spoke to Omoski from the hollow tree. It was poor Minniho!"

"It matters little. Omoski's spirit is broken! He has lost his heart. Farewell! He will never join his tribe again!"

So saying, the Indian turned, and rushing into the depths of the dark woods, soon was out of sight.

Minniho followed him, her hair streaming, her eyes strangely wild, vainly calling upon him to come back.

Before the other Indians could imitate her example, one of their scouts came in reporting that a force of the cavalry now was scouring the woods.

Crockett advanced to meet them, while the Indians immediately left, making their way toward the Savannah. As the hunter hurried forward, he suddenly heard the cries of Minniho on his right, as if for assistance. He hastened in the direction of the sound, and soon came upon a clearing in which a couple of cavalrymen had rushed at Omoski, and were now striking at him with their sabers. The young Indian had, when attacked, reached a small collection of thin trees, almost saplings, amid which he now stood motionless, calmly and scornfully awaiting his fate.

"Ker-whoop, hold back!" exclaimed Killb'ar, rushing forth.

The soldiers paused, as the hunter emerged to view.

"No, no, yer mustn't kill this 'ere red-skin!" continued Killb'ar; "he are a different skunk from the kind you are used to, and are under my protection!"

"And who are you, friend?"

"DAVID CROCKETT, at yer service!"

"David Crockett!" exclaimed one of the soldiers, extending his hand; "are you really he?"

"Of course I am! Thar can be no mistake about that, seein' as I oughter know myself."

"If you are," said the soldier, thrusting his hand in his pocket, "here is a letter for you. It was put into my hands by a woman as I was passing a cabin on the other side of the mountains. She said she was your wife."

Crockett took the letter, a joyful grin extending all over his face, and was soon deep in its contents. While he was reading it, Omoski made off, and so also did the two soldiers. When the hunter had finished his letter, he looked up to find himself alone.

"Well, this are sartinly an adventur' which I won't easily forget! I am mighty sorry for that are poor Moscow, which war a good fighter for an Injun. Now, I s'pose I better git back to the settlement, ef I kin without attractin' the attention of Suke Spoon."

He finally arrived at the settlement, and sought the house of Lucy's uncle, where he was warmly received both by the young girl herself and by Mark Winters. The hunter's surprise at seeing his friend, apparently risen from the dead, may be imagined. On hearing Mark's story, he burst into a roar of laughter.

"Well, now, I kin say that almost beats the biggest adventur' I ever had in my life. I war once caught by Injuns and harf burned. Before they burned me all up, I jist conkluded to play devil, which might possibly save my life. Well, it did it, fur I jist sucked the smoke and flame through my skin and then blowed it out of my mouth and nose, which war a perfect success, as it sent'em all howlin' into the woods. Then I jist cut my bonds and made off a-larin' as ef I would split!"

Two days later Mark Winters was married. Among the assembled guests was David Crockett, standing in a corner, leaning on his rifle and grinning from ear to ear. Suke Spoon had not

troubl'd him since his return to the settlement, but having concluded to go in search of him, had remained absent ever since.

What was the hunter's consternation, however, toward the conclusion of the ceremony, to see enter the room no less a personage than the formidable Suke, still carrying the knapsack containing the gridiron and pot.

The former article she unloosened, then placed herself in front of the dismayed hunter, catching him by the hair of the head and drawing him toward the minister, heedless of the expostulations and cries of "Order!" all around her.

"Ker-whoop! yer deceitful hoosier. Jist yer come and marry me ter once, or I'll hev onmarciful satisfaction. Come along, come along! Thar never war sich a persecuted female as me in the hull country! Squarm and kick, will yer! I've found yer now, and yer got ter marry me!"

"Ginger and merlasses! ef I do may I be shot! I'm married already. Thunder and lightnin'! b'ars and catamounts! dogs and buffaloes! let go my ha'r, won't yer!"

"No, I won't! My affeckshuns is consumed on the halter! My heart is a-bu'stin' with mingled grief and indignashun! How kin I let go yer ha'r under them circumstances?"

"Ker-roop! ker-roop! Look out thar! Hyar goes! Hoo-oo-oo! whoop!"

At the same moment something whizzed through the air like a cannon-ball and went bounding through the open window to the ground, a distance of twenty feet.

It was David Crockett, who, by leaving a handful of hair in the hands of loving Suke, had contrived to escape her iron grasp.

For a long time after, Suke searched for him but could not discover him. Finally, learning that he had joined the army of General Jackson, she had thoughts of enlisting as a *vivandiere*.

This idea was discouraged by her father, who, having built a new house, wanted Suke. She obeyed, after much opposition, as a dutiful daughter should, and endeavored to quench her sorrows in manifold household duties.

Finally she married a half-breed trapper, who made her a good husband, as he was obliged to do under the management of such a powerful wife.

When the war was over, Crockett, being in Georgia, concluded to discover the fate of Omoski. He traveled many miles, as usual subsisting by his rifle, and sleeping when he halted for rest in hollow trees or upon the open plain. Finally he found himself in a deep forest in Florida. He walked a long distance until near sundown, when he came to the edge of a gloomy, far-extending swamp. He was about turning back when he beheld a pair of sharp eyes peering at him from a thick mass of tangled shrubbery. At first he thought they were the eyes of some Indian, but he was undeviated by a low snarl, and the next moment a panther sprung forth with a bound, crouching within a few feet of him. As the piece was discharged, however, the animal must have moved its head, for, although Crockett's aim was a sure one, the bullet merely grazed the top of the creature's skull. With a yell like that of a whole band of Indians, the panther now made a spring for Crockett, who, however, stepping nimbly to one side, avoided the animal's claws, and drove his hunting-knife into its neck. The animal had soon turned and made another spring at him. This time he was not as fortunate as before. The creature succeeded in planting its claws in his shoulder, and would probably the next moment have grasped his head in its capacious jaws, if a bullet from some hidden rifle, ringing sharp and clear through the woods, had not laid the creature low!

Crockett rose to his feet, and glancing in the direction whence the sound had seemed to come, beheld the smoke of the piece ascending in the very center of the swamp. He leaned forward, and as the smoke cleared, caught a glimpse of a tall, thin figure, in faded Indian garb, gliding like a phantom through the shadows of the thicket swamp.

"Well, now!" he exclaimed, "this are sart'inely queer enough; to save a man's life and then scamper off in sich a manner as that! Ef I war the feller, I should sart'inely be glad to shake hands with him I'd saved!"

"Hello, thar!" continued Crockett, as he sprung from hummock to hummock, "won't ye jist stop and let me see yer face? Come, now, whar's the use of runnin' away in sich a fashion?"

He hurried on, and had nearly overtaken the strange form, when it suddenly vanished in a thick clump of shrubbery ahead. Crockett,

however, sprung resolutely forward and pushed aside the bushes, to catch another glimpse of the receding figure, crawling on like a snake.

"Ker-whoop! hold on, thar! Whar are yer goin'? Jist hold on one minit, and let me know ef you ain't Omoski!"

There was no reply, and Crockett, hurrying on, soon arrived upon the shore of a dim lake, through which he beheld a canoe containing the tall figure, vanishing amid a group of thick cypresses, growing out of the water!

Crockett, with darkness fast gathering round him, concluded that he had better find some spot upon which he might pass the night.

This was soon gained, but it was far from being a dry one. The hunter spread his buffalo skin, nevertheless, and seated himself upon it. By and by the moon came up, its silver light strangely contrasting with the gloom of the swamp. Crockett rose, and threw a keen glance around him; he thought he heard a distant voice.

He listened intently—the voice came nearer, and now he distinguished the words:

"Omoski! Omoski!"

He gazed in the direction of the sound, and faintly revealed, like a distant phantom, he beheld, far away upon the lake, passing an instant over a long, narrow strip of moonlight, athwart the water, the form of a girl, whose garb was evidently that of an Indian.

"Ef that ain't Minniho, who else kin it be?" muttered the hunter. "Either she and Omoski are a-livin' together, or else she are still a-sarchin' and tryin' to win him to her. Love are sart'inely a powerful stimulator, when it plays sich pranks with a poor gal!"

He watched, hoping to see the female again, but he was not gratified.

Daylight came at last, and before sunrise Crockett had commenced searching the swamp thoroughly.

Vain the search. The swamp and lake were of such vast extent, and so filled with thick clumps of shrubbery, that he could discover no sign of those he had looked for.

Finally he returned to dry land, where he remained, before starting on the homeward route, for several days, but saw no more of the two figures, although he always would insist that they were Minniho's and Omoski's.

Other travelers, wandering hunters and trappers, for years afterward, would bring to the settlements reports of hearing, while passing a certain gloomy swamp, the plaintive cries as of a girl, pronouncing an Indian name.

The name was Omoski, and the girl was Minniho, still vainly calling upon her half-crazed Indian lover.

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 190 Dandy Darke. By Wm. R. Eyster.
 191 Buffalo Billy. By Capt. Taylor, U. S. A.
 192 Captain Kit. By Lieut. H. D. Perry, U.S.N.
 193 Captain Mask. By Philip S. Warne.
 194 Buffalo Bill's Bet. By Captain Taylor.
 195 Deadwood Dick's Dream. By Wheeler.
 196 Shadowed. By Charles Morris.
 197 Little Grit, THE WILD RIDER. By Ingraham.
 198 Arkansaw. By T. C. Harbaugh.
 199 Featherweight. By Edward Willett.
 200 The Boy Bedouins. By Whittaker.
 201 The Black Hills Jezebel. By Wheeler.
 202 Prospect Pete. By Oll Coomes.
 203 The Boy Pards. By Jos. E. Badger, Jr.
 204 Gold Plume, THE BOY BANDIT. Ingraham.
 205 Deadwood Dick's Doom. By Wheeler.
 206 Dark Paul, THE TIGER KING. By C. Morris.
 207 Navajo Nick. By T. C. Harbaugh.
 208 The Boy Hercules. By Oll Coomes.
 209 Fritz, THE BOUND-BOY DETECTIVE. Wheeler.
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 218 Tiger Tom, THE TEXAN TERROR. Coomes.
 219 Despard, the Duellist. By P. S. Warne.
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 221 Sugar Coated Sam. By E. L. Wheeler.
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